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TWICE-A-MONTH

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The Popular Magazine

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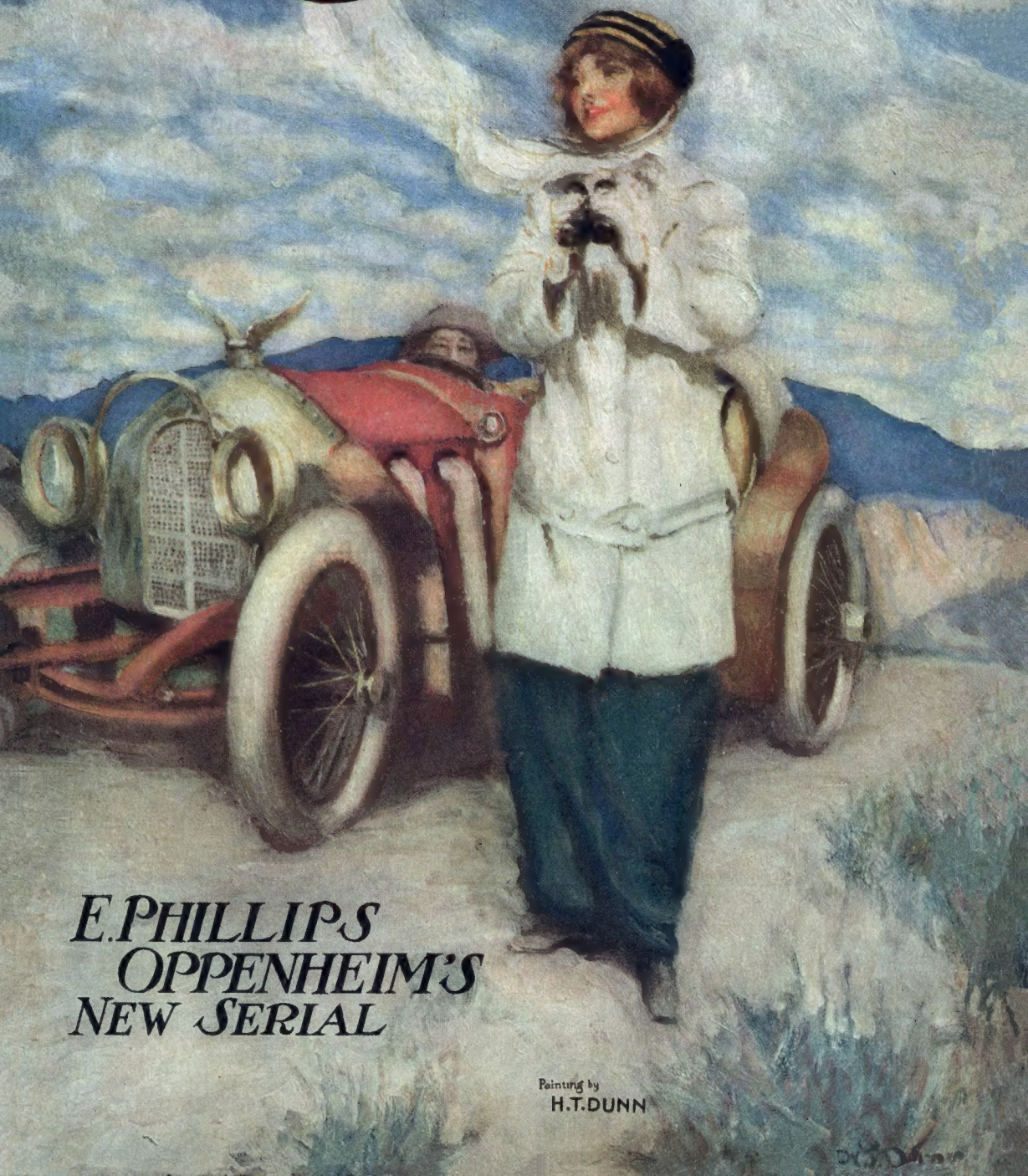

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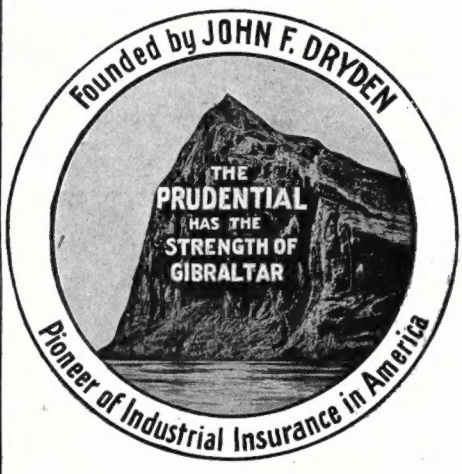

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VOLUME XXXII NUMBER 3

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

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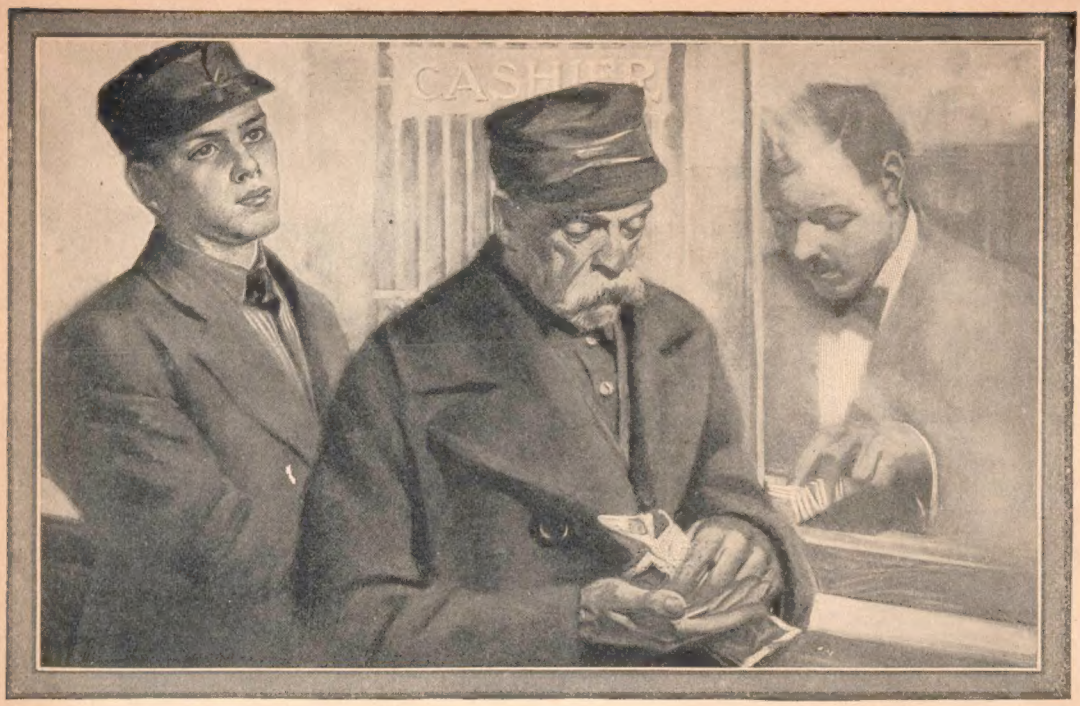

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXXII. MAY 15, 1914. No. 3.

Yankee Grit

By Holman Day

Author of "The Red Lane," "The Gashing Fiddlers," Etc.

An epic of the sea by a man whose intimate knowledge of the souls of mariners has been evidenced in a dozen novels and a hundred short stories. Beneath the hard shell of the seafarers Holman Day has penetrated and found both romance and imagination. You will relish this sea yarn which introduces you to a mariner of the old school, to a hustling product of the new, and to a number of interesting men and women, one at least of whom you will not forget—the girl who is the inspiration for the "Polly" song, a bit of verse that you can set to your own music. Regarding the incident of the ship turning turtle and the crew digging their way out through the upturned hull Holman Day declares that he is "prepared to prove to all doubters that the thing has actually happened." In a personal letter he instances a case in point and says: "The crew lived nine days on the bottom of the schooner, drinking rain water and living on raw porpoise meat. But that's another story!"

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

THE TAVERN OF THE SEAS.

INTO Saturday Cove, that afternoon, they came surging ahead of the gray fog—the wayfarers of the open main. First to roll in past the ledgy portals of the Cove were those coasters known as "The Apple Treers." Their weather-wise skippers smelled the fog early, and knew that they must depend on a thinning wind to cuff them into port. One after the other, rusty anchors splashed, and old, patched sails came sprawling down with chuckle of sheaves and lisp of running rigging.

There's a coast chantey that explains the name "Apple Treers":

Oh, what's the use o' compass or a quadrant or a log?
Keep her loafin' on her mudhook in a norther or a fog.
But as soon's the chance is better, then we'll ratch her off once more,
Keepin' close enough for bearings from the apple trees ashore.

Therefore, the topsail schooners, the fore-and-afters, the Bluenose blunt prows, came in early while the apple trees could still give them a course, and before it was necessary to guess at what the old card compasses might attempt to convey.

Then came a yacht club, cruising on its annual outing. The first arrivals jockeyed in with billowing mountains of snowy canvas to catch the last whispers of the breeze. The later arrivals were towed by the motor craft of the fleet. Brass cannon barked anchorage salute over bright rails which the sweat of the fog was dimming. There were cheery hails, bawled interchange of the day's experiences, and soon yacht tenders began to sift among the fleet with barking exhaust. The vast silences of the drifting fog were over all, and even the popping of champagne corks became audible; hosts were beginning to entertain the smartly dressed yachtsmen who came climbing to the quarter-decks from their tenders.

The bearded crews of the apple-tree fleet leaned the patched elbows of their old coats on the rails and gloomily surveyed the convivial doings; the skippers of the ancient craft, to be marked as skippers by their hard hats, marched between wheel and house, from alley to alley, spitting tobacco juice over the side at each turn in order to hint at their lofty disdain for these mere frolickers of the seas. Once in a while a speed boat from a yacht swept around under the counters of the venerable schooners, carrying a creaming smother of water under the upcocked bow; a gnat of a boat worth twice as much as the rust-streaked old wagon it splashed with its wake.

Everlastingly there was the clank of pumps on board the Apple Treers. The pumps were tackling the everlasting leaks. Water reddened by contact with bricks, water turbid from percolation through paving blocks, splashed from the scuppers.

After the same speed boat had threshed three times under his counter and twice under his bow, Captain Epps Candage, of the *Polly*, leaned over the rail and gave the yachtsmen a scowl which contained about as much venom as an ancient mariner can well compress into a look.

"Them buzz bugs act as if they'd never seen a bo't before," he remarked to "Oakum Otie," who was seated cross-legged on the deck, hammering down the lumps in a freshly twisted eye-splice with the end of a marlinespike. Oakum Otie made himself at home on the quarter-deck of the *Polly*, for he combined in one person the qualities of first mate, second mate, A-1 seaman, hand before the mast, and skipper's boon companion.

"It's always been a wonder to me," proceeded Captain Candage, "how dudes that don't seem to know no more'n the dudes who sail them frosted-cake yachts around ever make money the way they do so as to afford it."

"They don't make it—don't know enough to," stated Otie, with the air of a man who knew exactly what he was talking about. "It has all been left to 'em by their fathers."

"There ain't nothing about this schooner to make 'em gawp at us like we was a holy show," growled the captain. "They want to look out or I'll heave a bunch of shingles at 'em," he added, running a wrathful eye over his deck load as if selecting a missile.

Some one other than Captain Candage might have suggested that either he was too familiar with the looks of the *Polly* to appreciate her picturesqueness, or else lacked all ability to note the oddities of life.

She had an outthrust of blunt bow and an upcock of square stern that as accurately revealed ripe antiquity as would a bell-crowned hat and a brass-buttoned swallow tail in the case of a venerable man. She displayed seams that were like the wrinkles in the parchment skin of old age. She carried a figurehead under her bowsprit, the bust of a woman carved from wood; probably once the carving had been glori-

ously gilded; it was now gray and cracked, and yet the face presented a simper of a smile. The galley was entirely hidden under a deck load of shingles and laths in bundles; the house was broad, and loomed high above the rail instead of being a mere cubby such as distinguished most of the fore-and-afters in the harbor.

Back on its course swished the darting tender. But this time its purring motor whined into silence, the boat swung and came drifting alongside.

"On board *Polly*," called one of the yachtsmen, a man with owner's insignia on his cap.

Captain Candage stuck a lowering visage over the rail, and said no word in reply.

"Isn't this *Polly* the real one?" inquired the visitor.

"What do you mean by 'real one'? Don't look like a ghost of her, or a chromo painting, does it?"

'Isn't she the ancient *Polly* that was a privateer in the War of Eighteen Hundred and Twelve?"

"No one ever said she wasn't."

"Well, sir, mayn't we come aboard and look her over?"

"No, sir, you can't."

"But we're very much interested, captain," pleaded the yachtsman.

"You've skyhooted past here times enough to show that something was the matter with you."

"We didn't mean to annoy you, captain. But one of these gentlemen with me is a writer, and he'd like to take a few pictures, and——"

"And make fun of me and my bo't by putting a piece in the paper to tickle city dudes! Fend off! Go 'long about your own business, if you've got any, which I much doubt."

"Father," cried a reproving voice. "Father, I'm ashamed of you."

A girl came running up the companionway. When she was on the quarter-deck and those in the speed boat could see her, the yachtsmen swapped a few exclamations of genuine surprise.

"Merciful mother of mermaids!" gasped a man in the stern sheets to his companion. "Pipe the peach!"

She was a mighty pretty girl—there was no gainsaying it. But she had appeared to them so suddenly, her background was so archaically homely, her habitat so out of harmony with her looks, that her natural beauty was doubly effective at that moment. The yachtsmen might have given her only a passing glance on Broadway; now they gaped and goggled at her as if she were Aphrodite risen from the sea.

She tucked her curls up under the white Dutch cap she wore. Her face was piquant with just a little uptilt to her nose to give her the air of a young woman who had a will of her own and the disposition to exercise it.

The men in the tender whipped off their caps and saluted her.

"You have insulted these gentlemen, father."

"You go below where you belong."

"I belong up here just now."

"Down below with you!" bawled Captain Candage.

"I won't go till you apologize to these gentlemen."

"You ain't ashore now, miss! You're on the high seas, and I'm cap'n of this vessel. Below, I say!"

"If you don't apologize, father, I shall apologize for you." She started for the rail, but he clapped his brown hand over her mouth and pushed her back.

"I'll teach ye shipboard discipline, Polly Candage," he grated, "even if I have to take ye acrost my knee."

"Hold on, there, captain," called the spokesman of the motor-boat party.

Captain Candage was hustling his daughter toward the companionway. He paused and jutted a challenging chin over his shoulder.

"What have any of you critters got to say about this?" he demanded.

"Only that we are getting away from here before we bring more trouble upon the handsomest young lady on the sea between Quoddy Head and the Monomoy Light," declared the gallant yachtsman. He added: "That seems to be the only way to help her just now. You wouldn't understand gentlemanly protest. We haven't a vocabulary that a rhinoceros would understand."

Captain Candage did not grasp the full significance of the big words, but the fact that he had been called a rhinoceros got to him very promptly. He released his daughter, yanked the marlinespike away from Otie, and stamped to the rail. He poised his weapon, fanning it to and fro in the air to take aim. But the engineer threw in the clutch, and the speed boat foamed off before Captain Candage got the range—and he was too thrifty to heave a perfectly good marlinespike after a craft that he could not hit, mad as he was. The yachtsmen stood up and bowed again to the girl, caps in their hands.

She did not return their salute; there was no suggestion of the coquette in her mien. She turned upon her father with flaming anger. There were tears of rage in her eyes.

"How did you dare to do such a thing to me—those gentlemen looking on? Have you lost your mind, father?"

"You call me Cap'n Candage," he commanded. "I'm Cap'n Candage on the high seas, and I propose to run my own quarter-deck. And when I let a lot of dudes traipse aboard here to peek and spy and flirt with you, you'll have clam shells for finger nails. Now, my lady, I don't want no back talk."

He had the surly grit of the old sea dog, but his daughter had the fire of youth to go with her Candage nature. She walked close to him, her face crimson with angry shame and rebellion.

"Back talk, quarter-deck discipline, calling you captain—folderol and fiddlesticks!" she cried. "I'm your own daughter, and you're my father, and you have just made me ashamed of you. There! I don't want to be here on this old hulk, and you know it. You have dragged me out of a good home with Aunt Zilpah. I am miserable here."

"Good home with your Aunt Zilpah, hey? Yes, my own sister, taking advantage of my being off at sea to aid and abet your flirting around——"

"Father, don't you dare!" she blazed. "You're insulting good Aunt Zilpah, just as you have taken to insulting everybody else. I never flirted with anybody. Don't you think I have any self-respect?"

The cook had arrived with the supper balanced in his arms, crawling over the deck load. He was listening with great interest, and his attention, before the angry girl had discovered his presence, added to her bitter indignation.

"Every sneer you let out here, father, will be carried back and spread around the village by these men. Oh, you are wicked—wicked!" She put her hands to her face, and ran down the steps of the companionway.

"I don't blame ye, capting," commented Otie. "No matter what she says, she wasn't to be trusted among them dudes on shore, and the dudes on the water is just as bad; them fellers was flirting with her all the time they was 'longside. Real men ain't called on to keep whisking their caps off and on all the time—and I see one of 'em wink at her."

"Don't you worry," stated Captain Candage. "I've got her now where I can keep my eye on her—and I'm cap'n of my own vessel."

He turned on the cook, known to his intimates as "Smut-nosed Dolph."

"What ye standing here for, letting my supper cool off? Get below and dish it onto the table."

Captain Candage lingered a moment, hand at his ear. The fog was settling over the inner harbor. In the dim vastness seaward an arriving steamer was hooting thirty-second warnings of its approach. It was a diapason blast.

"Wonder what a big feller is coming in here for?" he inquired of Otie.

"Most likely only another tin skimmer of a yacht," allowed the mate, tossing the completed eye-splice and the marlinespike into the open hatch of the lazaret. "Some of them dudes play with a whistle that's big enough for Seguin foghorn."

He squinted under his hand.

"There she looms—nothing but a yacht."

She did loom at first sight, for the fog plays strange pranks with objects. But when she had edged in closer past the scattered fleet she was revealed as a medium-sized steam yacht. She had a squat, brown funnel, tipped back at rakish angle; and a battleship bow distinguished her.

"Huh! it's only old Adams' *Olena,*" said Captain Candage. "He's been lurking 'long coast all summer. Guess he's hanging round trying to get up courage to blow up that new Bee Line Transportation Company steamer that's cutting into his concern so bad."

"Guess the new line really is stinging him," commented Otie.

"I'm sure of it—I'm darned glad of it," returned the captain savagely. "His blasted old towboats and barges have pretty nigh put us coasters out of business. Now I'm glad to see a new scheme come along and rounce him good and hard. He et *us*—now let 'em eat *him.* I'll stand by and chuckle."

The master of the *Polly* clumped down the companionway, and Otie followed him to the supper table.

Captain Candage cast a sharp glance at his daughter. She had dried her tears very promptly, and gave him a look of defiance that challenged him. He knew her spirit and her moods, and was not surprised that she had regained her self-possession so quickly.

"Perhaps I went a mite too far, Polly," he said, still a bit surly. "But seeing that I've had to bring you to sea to get you away from designing dudes, it made me mad to have you stram up there on deck and call me names before 'em and give 'em a chance to flirt with you."

She did not reply.

"Hain't I always worked hard for you—sailing the seas and going without things, myself, so that you could have 'em—doing the best I could for you, since your poor mother died?"

"I'm grateful to you, father," said the girl. "But, oh, you don't understand a girl—you don't understand. But let's not talk about it any more—not now," she added hastily, checking him with appealing gesture. "You think you're doing right. When your eyes have been opened, you'll know you're doing wrong."

There was a long silence, broken only by the clang of the steam yacht's bell and the swish of her reversing screw, as she eased herself to anchorage.

"What boat is that—the one that's just anchoring?" the girl asked her father.

"*Olena,* old Adams' yacht—him that's president of the Atlantic Barge Company, Polly. Him nor none that's with him are of any account to us."

That remark, in the light of what happened later, proved that Captain Candage was no kind of a prophet.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE BRIDGE OF YACHT "OLENA."

It was perfectly plain that the towboat-and-barge magnate of waterways, Marston Adams, owner of yacht *Olena,* was in no amiable frame of mind. He tramped to and fro along the narrow bridge of his craft while *Olena* crawled

to her anchorage. Half of an unlighted cigar, which was soggy with the dampness of the fog, plugged his mouth and jutted from his close, gray beard. He scowled at Captain Lawrence Thornton, his skipper, every time he passed the young man. But the captain had his eyes on his business and did not appear to notice. Pushing a yacht through the fog to her berth in a crowded port is a job requiring a skipper's undivided attention, and Adams understood that and restrained himself.

But when the captain had made sure that the hook was set and had given the jingle releasing the engineer, Mr. Adams planted himself before his skipper, rolled the plugging cigar to a corner of his mouth, and inquired through the other corner: "Now tell me what the devil you mean by saluting a Bee Line steamer?"

The young man wiped the fog beads from his eyes and stared at his employer.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Adams, but I did not salute the *Conomo*."

"You gave her three blasts."

"I did give her three blasts, but it was——"

"This is no fishing steamer you're on now. This is a gentleman's yacht. But you don't seem to get out of your fishing-steamer habits. Don't you know that yachting etiquette does not allow a steam whistle to be sounded in salute?"

"I know it perfectly well, sir."

"There's another thing you know perfectly well—you know the Bee Line is starting in to try to run me out of business. The manager of their concern was on board that new steamer of theirs. Why did he blow that devilish siren? To give me the laugh—to sneer at me! You knew it. And yet you gave him three whistles."

"Yes, sir."

"I've been holding back my opinion of you for an hour and a half, till you made port. Now, sir——"

"Just one moment, Mr. Adams, if I may ask the favor! If you had been on the bridge you would have understood. Didn't you hear me give him two blasts first, answering his two?"

"I'm not talking about your meeting signals," said the owner.

"But after he had given me two blasts and I had answered and had swung to port, he deliberately began to crowd me onto the Razee Reefs."

"Then you ought to have given him one blast and made your bigness. I ain't letting the Bee Line dictate to me in a seaway."

"Would you let me lose my license by giving cross signals, sir? Even a man trained on a fishing boat knows better than that," replied the captain. He met the stare of the furious owner with quiet resolve in his dark eyes.

"You belong back there on a seiner, covered with gurry and fish scales," sneered Adams.

Captain Thornton stiffened. The spirit of a Yankee mariner who knew that he was right glowed in his eyes.

"And then you saluted him," persisted Adams.

"I gave him three whistles, as the code provides—and three whistles meant that my engines were going full speed astern. And even then he hugged the reefs as close as he dared to. Some day he will hug 'em too close—I know those reefs!"

"When I came up you were waving your hand to him—are you going to deny that? Three whistles and a hand wave! I tell you, you were saluting."

"I was shaking my fist, sir."

"You're all alike, you clam flatters. Hand and glove with all the cheap muckers on the cargo carriers! I know your breed. I wish I could find the right kind of a man in New York. The curse of it is, it's only you fishermen

who know the short cuts on this coast." He walked away from the indignant captain to the end of the bridge. When he spun on his heel and came back, the captain was ready to address him, and the red under his tanned skin indicated what the nature of the address would be, but a young chap in a white jacket, the steward, came upon the bridge.

"Mr. Blake's compliments, sir," he reported, saluting the owner. "But he says your high ball is getting warm."

Adams flung his soggy cigar over the rail and departed. He did not turn his head when his skipper asked him to wait a moment.

Captain Thornton began to pace the bridge, his square jaws set, his face hard. But his dour expression did not conceal the fact that he was a remarkably fine specimen of manly good looks; his close-fitting uniform revealed the set up of an athlete. There was a poise about him that suggested the gentleman masquerading as a skipper.

A girl came forward along the dripping deck and stood for a moment at the foot of the bridge ladder, buttoning her reefer close about her neck. Her gaze caressed the tall figure above until he glanced down on her at one of his turns. Their interchange of glances would have revealed a great deal, even to an unobservant person.

The girl began to climb, and the skipper came to the top of the ladder, his cap in one hand, the other hand outstretched to assist her. She studied his expression eagerly and with apprehension as she approached him.

"Father hasn't dared to say any of those things to you that he said below!" she gasped. "Oh, no—no——" She glanced about to search for eavesdroppers, and added softly: "My Lawrence!"

"I don't know what he said below," he informed her gravely. "But what he said to me on the bridge, here, was plenty."

"But I know you didn't do anything but what was just right," she insisted. "I know it, because you know everything about what is right to do on the sea."

"I know my duties."

"Did he blame you for anything?"

"I think it was worse than that." He smiled wistfully, for her eyes were searching his face as if appealing for a bit of consolation.

"Lawrence, don't mind him—this—this time," she pleaded. "I know that father is worried about business these days. He doesn't mean all he says to folks—really, he doesn't. He talks to me just as snappy and hateful some days."

"Some men like to abuse those who are nearest to them," said the young man bitterly. "But I'm not near enough to him to endure the talk he has just given me—and I'm a Yankee master mariner, not a foremast hand."

"It's very, very hard for me to say this of my father, Lawrence," she went on, and the fog drops that gemmed her hair were matched by the tears that came into her eyes. "But he is not himself some days when he is with Mr. Blake. Mr. Blake drinks—drinks, and he keeps urging father to drink. If father has said anything wicked to you, he will be sorry."

She came close to him, patting her hand on his arm. She put her appealing face almost against his broad shoulder. Her gray eyes pleaded when her voice was still. Her lips were parted, and she had such a Cupid's bow of a mouth! And she was such a wisp of a girl! Rather more child than woman. One of those waves of tenderness that so often swept through him when she was near prompted him to clasp and crush her in his arms. Her whole expression invited such capture. But he

set his brown fingers about the rail of the bridge and stared out into the fog.

"I've got to wake up," he groaned.

"You haven't called me 'Leah, sweetheart' since I have come up here," she chided, just a flicker of a pout showing on her lips.

"I've got something to say to you, my little girl," he went on, after a pause. He still clung to the rail, as if to confine his hands and stare off into the mists. "I don't want to say it. I don't know how to say it. I have never known how to talk to girls, anyway."

"You don't need to talk, you solemn old Yankee, you! I know what you think when you look at me."

"But I must say it."

"Say only this: 'I love you, Leah,'" she coaxed, snuggling closer to him.

He gasped and clutched his fingers more tightly around the rail. The fog shrouded them where they stood high on the bridge. Even the near objects on the yacht were hidden from them.

"I love you, Leah, darling," he whispered. "I love you against all caution, all sense, all hope. I love you as a beggar dreams of paradise. I don't dare to wake up."

"Ah, it is a very real dream," she declared, with her funny little chuckle that always stirred him so profoundly. She rose on tiptoe and brushed a kiss across his wet cheek. "Ah, yes! You do seem asleep to-day, my big boy!"

But even then he restrained himself.

"I am going to leave this yacht—give up this position," he blurted.

"Oh, my Lawrence, I'll die. We can't see each other."

"As long as I continue to work for your father, I'll seem only like one of his lackeys, so far as his opinion goes. I've still got a bit of rather stiff pride. A Yankee doesn't like to sneak around behind a father's back to court his daughter. Leah, I love you. I love you so much that I can't endure this thing any longer. I'll hunt up another position. I'll have your love to help me to make good. Then I'll come for you."

"I'm going to my father and tell him," declared the girl. "I'll not give you up like this."

"It is not giving me up—if you'll be true and wait."

"If I cannot see you and be with you every day, it will be giving you up. I shall tell my father."

"Then he will be in a position to insult me so wickedly that I may not be able to keep my hands off him. Leah, for Heaven's sake, be careful how you act in this matter. A rich man to-day feels that he's a king and all his are of royal blood. Let me go away and win out, too. Then I can talk to your father and hold my head up. He can't sneer that I'm a fortune hunter."

She would have continued, but then they heard her father calling to her. He was at the foot of the bridge ladder.

"Are you up there, Leah?" he demanded, for the twilight and the fog made all things dim.

"Yes," she returned shortly.

"Come down." She would have protested, but Thornton pressed her hand to counsel obedience, and led her to the top of the ladder.

"I don't want you on that bridge when I'm not there," proceeded Adams, speaking loudly, though she had leaped down beside him.

"I'll walk on deck for a time."

"Come below, I say. Mr. Blake is inquiring for you."

"I don't like Mr. Blake."

"I want you to like him—do you understand? No more talk, now." He took her arm and started for the after companionway.

Captain Thornton grasped the rails of the bridge ladder and slid to the deck without touching his feet to the treads.

"Mr. Adams!" he called, not loudly.

"Well?" inquired the owner sharply.

"I am leaving my position as soon as you can get a man to take my place."

"It isn't convenient for me to make a change in the middle of the season."

Leah Adams stepped back and tried to make the captain look at her. He kept his eyes resolutely from her face.

"You mustn't bother my father with changes when he has so much business on his mind, Captain Thornton," she said, trying to keep her voice steady and her tone haughty.

"I insist on being relieved," repeated the skipper.

"You're making a fool of yourself over that call I gave you," blurted the owner, "that's what you're doing. You can't take a call like a hired man should, and now you want to spite me. You stick to your job till I'm ready to get somebody else. You and I will worry along, all right, now that I have set you down where you belong."

"I have decided that I don't belong aboard your yacht, sir," stated the captain, with emphasis that he and the girl understood better than did Adams. "You must get another skipper."

"You needn't tell me what I must do. I can't pick captains out of this fog. The responsibility of this yacht is on you. I have some telegrams for you to take ashore, Captain Thornton. I'll send them out by the steward. Take them yourself. I don't want to trust your understrappers with 'em. They're important."

He went on into the cabin.

The girl turned a beaming countenance on Thornton from the companionway, and gave her delighted little chuckle, making a pretty grimace of triumph at him. She plainly believed that his impetuous resignation had been overruled, and that she had had a finger in keeping him beside her.

The captain did not respond to her raillery. He called two of the crew and grouchily ordered the steps down and the port dinghy cleared and lowered. When the telegrams were sent out, he took the tiller ropes, and his men rowed him off through the fog.

It was touchy picking in that murk. A few of the vessels, knowing that they were in the harbor roadway, clanged their bells lazily once in a while. Yacht tenders were making calling rounds from craft to craft, and were avoiding each other by loud hails. Small objects loomed largely, and little sounds were accentuated.

The far voice of some unseen boatman announced that he could find his way through the fog all right provided he had strength enough to push his boat through it. But Thornton, with mariner's instinct, headed a direct course to the wharf at the head of the harbor, dispatched his business at the village telegraph office, and began his return voyage to the *Olena*.

Suddenly the fog ahead of him was painted with such a flare that he was fairly frightened for a moment. He believed that some craft was on fire. The *Olena* lay in that direction. He ordered his men to pull for all they were worth. In a few minutes he burst in upon a scene that allayed his fears but aroused all his curiosity.

CHAPTER III.

POLLY, OF THE "POLLY."

A dozen yacht tenders were gathered in a flotilla near the stern of a rusty old schooner. All the tenders were burning Coston lights, and from several boats hilarious yachtsmen were sending off rockets which striped the pall of fog with bizarre colorings.

The thick curtain of the mist caught up the flare of the torches and made it seem as if a gigantic conflagration were raging in the heavens overhead. Shadows of men were thrown against the fog screen in grotesque and Gargantuan outline.

Captain Thornton steered close to the

drifting flotilla, and spied a yacht captain whom he knew.

"What's it all about?" he inquired. The stern of the old schooner was well lighted up by the torches. He saw that she was the venerable *Polly*.

"They're serenading old Epps Candage's girl," explained the other skipper, with a grin. "Seems that Epps has taken her with him this trip to break up a courting match, and he sassed some of the gents of our fleet to-day because they looked twice at her. They're making believe serenade the girl—but I reckon it's meant for old Epps."

But Thornton did not return the other's grin.

"Oh, it's only in fun," said the informant.

"Maybe it's the kind of fun that hurts where a girl is concerned," said Thornton. "I don't know what kind of a girl this one is, but I'll bet it's shaming her."

"All I know about her is that she's a pretty girl—and a little good-natured fun never hurts a pretty girl. Hold on a minute, cap! They're going to sing that new song one of the gents of the *Sunbeam* has made up about her. I heard 'em rehearsing it."

The minstrel of the yachtsmen stood up, balancing himself in a tender. He was clearly revealed by the lights, magnified by the aureole of fog which surrounded him. He sang in waltz time, in a fine tenor:

"Our Polly O,
O'er the sea you go;
Fairer than sunbeam, sweeter than moon gleam,
All of us love thee so!
While the breezes blow
To waft thee, Polly O,
We will be true to thee, crossing the blue to thee,
Polly—Polly!
Dear little Polly—
Polly—O!"

He finished, and raised both arms with the gesture of a choral conductor.

"All together, now, boys!"

They sang with soul and vigor and with excellent effect.

Projecting over the rail of the venerable schooner was the convulsed face of the choleric Captain Epps Candage. The freakish light painted everything visible with arabesques, and the stern of the old *Polly* was weirdly illuminated. The reddened, scowling visage of the captain looked like a gargoyle.

"Music ain't seeming to soothe that savage breast any," observed somebody in the hearing of Captain Thornton.

"You drunken dudes, clear off away from here!" roared the infuriated skipper. "I'll have the law on ye for breaking the peace."

That threat in those surroundings stirred great hilarity.

"Duck, here comes a cop," cried a jeering yachtsman.

"He's walking on the water," suggested another.

"If the old fool would go below and shut up, they'd get tired and leave in a few minutes," Captain Thornton informed his acquaintance.

But Captain Candage, baited by his tormentors, seemed to believe that retreat would be greatly to his discredit. He continued to hang over the rail, discharging as complete a line of deep-sea oaths as ever passed the quivering lips of a mariner. Therefore, his audience of playful yachtsmen, highly entertained, remained and prodded him on. Every few minutes they sang the Polly song, while the enraged skipper danced to it and flung his arms around.

Thornton soon grew tired of this exhibition, and gave orders to his men to row on.

When he stepped on board the *Olena*, he got a swift view of the interior of the saloon, for the curtains were frankly drawn away from the ports.

Mr. Blake, a young man with flushed face and air of proprietorship, was sitting very close to Miss Adams, and her father had considerately turned his

back on them and was busy with some papers.

Again, and more acutely, did Thornton realize his position in this matter of his affections. He walked forward, and paced the deck for a long time, meditating.

There were no indications that the serenading yachtsmen were growing weary of their method of passing a fogbound evening. They had secured banjos and mandolins, and were singing the Polly song with greater gusto. Every now and then he heard the hoarse voice of Captain Candage delivering fresh maledictions. Under the damp gleam of the riding light, Captain Thornton continued to pace, rolling bitter thoughts and evolving desperate plans. In his absorption he did not note that a damp breeze had begun to puff spasmodically from the east, and that the fog was shredding overhead. But he did hear, all of a sudden, the vicious chuckling of sheaves; then there was the clank of capstan pawls.

The low-lying fog was still thick near the water, and he could not see what craft was proposing to take advantage of the sluggish breeze. He wondered that any coaster would attempt to leave the harbor. But the clank of the capstan pawls now sounded in staccato, showing that the anchor had been broken out.

A bellow from the darkness gave a hint as to the identity of the departing vessel.

"Dingdam ye," shouted the voice of Captain Candage, "there's one way of getting shet of the bunch of ye. You've driv' me to it—and now you can take your chances."

The next moment Thornton heard the ripping of tackle and a crash. A medley of angry voices shouted alarmed profanity.

"Down with that hook!" roared somebody. "You'll rake every yacht in this fleet with your cussed old dump cart of a schooner."

"There goes our boat boom and two tenders," cried somebody else, explaining another crash.

It was plain to Thornton that the overexasperated Candage was engaged in jockeying out through the fleet.

He could not see, but he could understand what damage was being done to the delicate fabric of the yachts by that unwieldy old tub. He knew that Captain Candage, of his own volition, in spite of what his sentiments were on the subject, would be unable either to prevent or perform damage until the breeze gave the schooner headway enough so that she could be steered. He was in no doubt as to what was happening—he could almost make estimate in detail of the damage as the Polly sluggishly thrust her way through the fleet. Here a boat boom carried away, there an enameled hull raked by the barnacles that crusted *Polly's* side. Now a tender smashed on the outjutting davits, next a wreck of spidery head rigging, the objurgations of the victims conveyed full information to all who were within a half mile of the scene.

The *Olena* was near the *Polly*. Until the latter got headway on her she drifted up harbor. Then she came about —a special outbreak of smashing signaled that performance.

Thornton rushed forward and pounded on the forecastle hatch.

"Rout out, all hands!" he called. "Rouse up bumpers and tarpaulin."

With the wind as it was, he realized that the old schooner would point up in his direction as she headed out to sea.

And that way she came, moving so slowly that there was merely a ripple at her apple bows, but moving irresistibly.

At last Thornton caught a glimpse of her through the fog. She was paying

off in the light breeze—the tide swinging her. The *Olena* was marked for a victim, too; nothing could prevent a sideswipe. Thornton had a master's pride in his craft—a mariner's devotion to his duty. He grabbed a huge bumper away from one of his men, and ran forward. He thrust it over the rail, leaning far to make sure it took the impact.

He was paying more attention to the safety of the *Olena* than he was to what the *Polly* might do to him. Under all bowsprits, to guy the headstays, is a short, perpendicular spar which is called the martingale, or dolphin striker. The makeshift riggers who had tinkered with the *Polly's* gear in times past had left several spikes in the lower end of the short spar, and these spikes now neatly hooked themselves into the back of Thornton's coat as he leaned over the rail. Mr. Adams had bought good and stout broadcloth for his uniforms. The fabric held, and the captain was yanked off his deck and went along.

His collar had been buttoned close about his neck to keep out the fog dampness, and was drawn tightly against his windpipe when he was picked up. He could not cry for help; in the darkness his men did not note his mode of departure; they were almighty busy just then trying to protect the *Olena*. The old schooner scrunched her way past the yacht, roweling her sides, smearing her with tar and slime, defiling her with the rancor that unclean feels toward clean. Then the *Polly* passed on into the night, her way open to the sea.

After a mighty struggle, almost fainting from lack of breath, nearly garroted by his collar, Thornton managed to set his hands about a stay and ease his throat. He dangled over the water. He hung there for a considerable time, feeling that he had not strength enough left to lift himself into the chains or to the footrope. He glanced up and saw the figurehead; it simpered at him with its irritating smile. It was like a bland stare of triumph. It angered him. He began to swing himself, and at last was able to throw a foot over a stay. He rested, and finally hoisted himself and straddled the bowsprit. He concluded that considerable time had elapsed while he had been in his dazed condition. The breeze was fairly strong now, and the sea gurgled and showed a few white threads of foam under the blunt bows.

He heard the pop of a motor boat far astern. The conviction came to him promptly that pursuit was on.

He scrambled along the bowsprit, inboard, and hurried aft over the piles of lumber on deck. He found three men on the quarter-deck, and Captain Candage, whom he recognized in the gloom, was stamping to and fro.

"Who in the devil are you?" bawled the old skipper. "Get offen here! This ain't no passenger bo't."

"I'll get off mighty quick, and be glad to," retorted Thornton. "Your old toad-stabber of a martingale picked me up. Heave to and let that motor boat that's coming catch up with us."

"Heave to your A'nt Roxanny!" snarled Captain Candage, coming close enough to note the yacht skipper's uniform coat. "Who do you think you're giving orders to aboard his own ship, you gilt-striped monkey-doodle dandy?"

"That boat, behind there, is coming after me, I tell you."

"Yes, and it may be coming to yank me back into port where a lot of cheap lawyers can sue and attach and libel my schooner."

"You ought to be seized and libeled. You had no business ratching out of harbor in the dark."

"Do you think I'm going to take a rising vote of dudes to see whether I've got a right to h'ist my mudhook or not?"

"I'm not here to argue—you can do

that in court. Come into the wind and wait for that boat."

"Jump overboard and swim back. This schooner is headed for New York, and don't stop at way stations."

The master of the old hooker resumed his march, squinting into the night at each turn.

"Sou'west by sou', and let her run," he told Smut-nosed Dolph, who was at the wheel.

Thornton grabbed one of the yawl davits, and sprang to the rail.

"Hoi oi!" he called into the night astern. "This way with the boat."

The popping was far off, and he realized that men in a motor boat hear indistinctly over an engine. But he intended to keep shouting. That intention was promptly frustrated. He was not prepared for Captain Candage's sudden attack. The skipper seized Thornton's legs and yanked him backward to the deck. The young man fell heavily, and his head thumped the planks with a violence that flung him into insensibility.

When he recovered he was in the schooner's cabin, and he found himself trussed up with rope yarn, and a marlinespike was lashed into his mouth for a gag. And the back of his head ached tremendously.

He rolled his eyes about, and discovered a companion in misery. A very pretty young woman was on the opposite side of the cabin, and she was lashed into a camp chair.

He gurgled at her ineffectually. The gag prevented speech. Her face expressed much sympathy.

"I wish I could help you, sir. That dirty spike must be terrible in your mouth."

He nodded to confirm her surmise.

"My father must have gone crazy. He has kept me tied into this chair all the evening. I suppose you're the gentleman who led the singers, and that's why he has taken you."

Thornton shook his head violently in protest at this suspicion.

"I didn't mind," she assured him. "I knew it was only in fun. Perhaps they wouldn't have teased one of their city girl friends in that way, but I'm only a poor country girl—and men must have a good time."

There were tears in her eyes, and his face grew purple with his efforts to make her understand his sentiments on the subject of that serenade.

"Don't try to talk, sir. This is shameful—it's wicked. But father wants to lose himself in the fog so that they can't catch him. I heard him tell Otie so."

Silence fell between them for some time. When a young man cannot use his tongue in the presence of a pretty girl, he must needs use his eyes in order to express his emotions, and Captain Thornton had exceedingly handsome dark eyes. To be sure, he was not trying to make love to this girl. His heart was too full of another personality. But he was sorry for her grief and her shame, and he tried to tell her so by his glances.

Finally Captain Candage came stumping down the companionway. He stood between them and glowered first at one of his captives, and then at the other.

"It's getting to a nice pass in this world when an honest man can't carry on his own private business without tying up meddlers so as to have a little peace," he growled. "What did ye come on board here for, messing into my business?" he demanded, shaking monitory finger under the young man's nose.

Thornton's best reply was a series of "guggles" and "uhs."

"Shut up that devilish gobbling, and talk sense," commanded the irate captain, with lofty and maddening disregard of Thornton's predicament. "Or, if ye can't talk sense, I'll help ye do it." He fished a clasp knife from his deep pocket and slashed away the rope yarn which bound the marlinespike.

"You can holler all you want to now," the jailer counseled. "Them dudes can't find their own mouths in a fog, much less this schooner."

"You know how I came aboard here," cried Thornton, after he had worked his aching jaws and had found his voice. "I told you above. You're taking me away from my duties. I'm skipper of the yacht *Olena*. Put back with me."

"Not by a tin tack! With the open sea ahead of me and reefs behind me, I've got to keep going in this fog. I ain't responsible for your being here. I'll land you as soon as I can—and that covers the law."

"At any rate, captain," said Thornton, after a pause, "you have no right to keep me tied up hand and foot."

"I ain't afraid of you, now that we've come to an understanding," declared Captain Candage. "I only warn you to mind your manners and remember that I'm captain aboard here."

He flourished his clasp knife and cut the lashings. He strode across and performed like service for his daughter.

"I reckon I can afford to let you loose, too," he muttered, "now that there ain't a raft of dudes hanging around for you to throw kisses to."

"Father," she cried passionately. "Oh! Oh!" She put her hands to her face.

As if that situation were a bit too trying for him, the captain wheeled about and climbed into the night through the narrow companionway.

The girl turned her back on Thornton, and bowed her head.

"I know better," he said gently, and with sympathy in his tones.

"Thank you," she said, not turning her head.

"My name is Lawrence Thornton," he ventured, after a period of silence.

"I'm Polly Candage."

After that they sat for a long time and said no word.

Thornton nursed ugly thoughts about his own affairs. He was so wholly absorbed that he did not note that the girl stole several glances in his direction.

"How did you tear your coat so badly in the back?" she asked at last.

He explained, telling the little story of his experience with the malicious martingale.

"I will mend it for you," she proffered. "I'm a country girl, you know, and I'm handy with my needle."

She brought her little box from a locker, and then held out her hand.

"It's no trouble," she interrupted, checking his protests. "Take it right off." There was a sort of matronly spirit of command in her despite her youth. "And a little work will help take my mind off what has happened to-day."

He placed the coat in her hands and sat down on the transom and watched her swift fingers close in the rent and darn the raveled places.

"You're making it look almost as good as new."

"Oh, a girl ought to know how to do all these things. I have lived with my aunt ever since my mother died. I have helped aunt—she earns her living by dressmaking."

He cast disparaging glances around the bare cabin.

"Do you sail often with your father for—ah—for an outing?"

"I used to go when mother was alive, but—but——"

She bent her head over her work and did not finish the sentence.

He shifted himself on the transom, for the schooner had begun to heel. He glanced up. The rain was smearing broad splashes on the glass of the windows.

The wind swept across the open companionway with a queer "guffle" in its tone. Thornton cocked his ear with seaman's caution and apprehension. In-

stinctively he began to look about for a barometer. He saw something across the cabin that looked like one, and investigated. It was a makeshift thing, the advertising gift of a yeast company, and the contents of the tube were roiled to the mark designating "Tornado."

"You can't tell nothing by that," said Captain Candage, descending the ladder. "It has registered 'Tornado' ever since the glass got cracked."

He began to pull some dirty oilskins out of a locker.

"I can smell weather better'n any blasted dudikins contrivance that was ever tinkered together."

Thornton hurried up the ladder and put out his head. There were weight and menace in the wind that hooted past his ears. The night was black, and the white wave crests which galloped alongside the schooner flaked the darkness with ominous signalings.

"If you can smell weather, Captain Candage," cried Thornton, dropping back into the cabin, "your nose ought to tell you that this is going to be something mighty nasty."

"Might be nasty for a dude on a yacht, but I've sailed the seas in my day and don't run for an inshore puddle every time the wind whickers a little," sneered the captain.

"Just let me inform you that I was a Grand Banksman from fifteen years of age to twenty, sir," said Thornton. "Until a year ago I was captain of the fishing steamer *Laura and Marion*. I have been first mate in the hard-pine trade from Southern waters. I tell you, you've got no business running out in this mess that is making to the east-'ard."

"If you've been so much and so mighty in your time, then you understand that a captain aboard his own ship takes orders from nobody."

"I understand perfectly well, sir. I'm not giving orders. But as a man whose life is worth something to him, I've got a right to tell you you're taking foolhardy chances. You know it, too."

Captain Candage, coaster, and cautious as coasters are obliged to be, realized perfectly well that he was in the presence of a man who understood, and he had not the nerve to dispute, even though his general grouch prompted him to do so.

"I got out because they drove me out," he growled.

"A man can't afford to be childish when he's in command of a vessel," stated Thornton. "You're too old a skipper to deny that."

"I was so mad I didn't stop to smell weather," admitted the captain, defending himself against mariners' culpability. "But I can't beat back to Saturday Cove against this—not now! She'd rack her blamed old butts out."

"Run her for Lumbo Reach. You can quarter a following sea. She ought to ride easy."

"It's a narrow stab in a night as black as this one is."

"I'll make a cross bearing for you—where's your chart?" volunteered Thornton, alert and anxious.

"I hain't needed one—not for this coast."

"Then I'll have to guess at it." He closed his eyes. "You gave a course of sou'west by sou', and we must have logged——"

"It ain't no use to stab for such a hole in the wall as Lumbo Reach," broke in Candage.

"But you've got your compass, and I can——"

"There ain't no depending on my compass within two points and a half—and it's a card compass, and spins so bad in a seaway there ain't no telling, anyway. I don't dare to run in the direction of anything that's solid—we'll hit it surer'n Tophet will toast corn bread. We've got to stay to sea."

Thornton clenched his fists and set

his teeth. The pale glimmer of the swinging cabin lamp tossed a flare against the night that pressed down through the companionway. It illuminated dimly two faces outside. Both Oakum Otie and Smut-nosed Dolph were at the wheel, for the schooner yawed madly at every plunge she made as the frothing seas hoisted under the counter, chasing her like wild horses. Those faces were very solemn. They were crouching like men who were trying to dodge a savage beast. They grunted as they twirled the wheel, striving to hold her up when she tobogganed with rushes that were breath-checking.

Thornton rushed to the girl and took the coat from her.

"It will do now—it will have to do, Miss Candage."

He drove his arms into the garment. He followed the skipper to the companionway, and there Candage turned on him, a final smolder of his surliness showing.

"I can handle my own bo't, sir."

"Yes, with a yeast barometer, a straw bottom, a pinwheel compass, and general cussedness," stormed Thornton, his anxiety whetting his temper. "I propose to start with you right here and now on a basis that you'll understand, Captain Candage. You're a stubborn old fool."

CHAPTER IV.

LIKE BUGS UNDER A THIMBLE.

Captain Lawrence Thornton further emphasized his general opinion of Captain Epps Candage by elbowing him to one side and leaping up the companionway in the lead.

"Give me that wheel and get in your washing!" he shouted to the two men. "This is no time for foolishness," he roared to the cursing Candage. "It's a case of work together to save our lives. She has got to come to!"

"She don't need nothing on her 'cept a double-reefed mitten with the thumb brailed up," stated Otie.

The wind was ugly, and had a growl in its tone, hinting at further mischief, but it had not attained to the velocity of a gale. Bringing her into the wind was not a hazardous undertaking at that moment.

"On second thought," shouted Thornton, "you know her tricks better than I do, sir. I'll help take in sail."

Captain Candage took the wheel obediently.

"Blow out the cabin light, Polly," he called down the companionway. "She's going to dance bad, and we don't want to run chance of fire."

The girl's face was pale, but the grit of her Yankee ancestry of the sea showed plainly in her poise and her silence. She blew out the light and sat in darkness.

The schooner came round on the run when the captain threw the wheel hard over, treading on the spokes with all his weight. They let the flapping mainsail go on the run, kept up the jumbo, and reefed the foresail down to its smallest compass.

Thornton singly knotted more reef points than both his helpers together, and his commands were obeyed unquestioningly. He animated the two men by his presence and his nimbleness.

"He certainly is chain lightning," confided Dolph to Otie.

"He knows his card," said Otie to Dolph.

Hove to, the schooner rode fairly comfortably. She was deep with her load of lumber, but the lumber made her buoyant, and she lifted easily. Her breadth of beam helped her over the sweeping seas—but the Atlantic open ocean was no place for such as the venerable *Polly* on a night like that.

That was the fervid and angry opinion of Captain Thornton as he crawled

aft over the bundles of shingles and laths.

"They knowed how to build schooners when this one was built," declared Captain Candage, considerably mollified by the manner in which his volunteer had taken hold. "She'll live where a dude yacht of twice her size would be smothered."

Thornton did not reply. He began to help Dolph and Otie furl the mainsail that was sprawled over the house.

"And I never knowed an August blow to ever amount to much."

The schooner washed her nose in a curving billow that came inboard and swept aft. She had halted and paid off, and had exposed herself to this wallop. "I've known an August blow to amount to a devil of a lot," declared Thornton, in a lull of the wind. "Especially when it bunches itself in a ten-minute squall."

A few moments later another wave crested itself ahead of the blunt bows and then seemed to explode, casting tons of water on deck. Laths, lumber, and shingles went hurtling into the sea.

"Good Cephas, this is going to lose us our deck lo'd," howled the skipper.

Above the piping of the wind Thornton heard a dull and solemn roar to windward. His mariner's sense suspected what this meant. The next instant his suspicions were verified. A shaft of lightning crinkled overhead, and spread its broad flare across the sea. A wall of white spume was revealed stalking down the ocean toward them. It was a summer "spitter" trampling the waves. A spitter is a veritable thunderbolt of wind—a concentration of gale—wind enough bunched into one gob to serve a whole day of tempest if spent thriftily.

"For the love o' Mike, don't ease her now—hold her into it!" screamed Thornton.

But just then another surging sea climbed aboard and wrested away more cargo, and Captain Candage's sense of thrift got more of a vital jab than his sense of fear. He threw her around, purposing to run with the wind until what was left of the deck load could be lashed more securely. Thornton, who had been straddling the main boom, leaped to the wheel, but he was too late.

The yelling spitter caught them as they were poised broadside on the top of a wave, before the sluggish craft had made her full turn. A billow, taking advantage of the loosened deck load, cuffed hard and drove the sliding lumber against the leeward rail and rigging. The spitter blew all its mighty breath into the flapping mainsail when it snapped loose.

The next instant the *Polly* was tripped. She went over like a man who catches his toe on a clothesline in the dark.

Instinctively, with one accord, the four men on deck dived for the cabin companionway. Probably, as sailors, the first thought of each was that the schooner was going onto her beam ends. To stay on deck meant instant disaster for them. The first wave would snatch them away.

They went tumbling down together in the darkness, and all four of them, with impulse of preservation as quick and true as that of the trapdoor spider, set their hands to the closing of the hatch and doors.

Thornton, his clutch on the knob of a door, found himself pulled under water without at first understanding just what had happened. He let go, and came up spouting. He heard the girl shriek in mortal terror, and she was so near that he put out his arm and caught her in his grasp. The water was up to his waist when he found footing. For an instant he could not understand the irregularities of the floor he was standing on.

"She's gone clear over, and we're

standing on the cabin ceiling," squalled a voice in the black darkness. Then Thornton understood that the inequalities beneath his feet were the beams and the carlings.

The *Polly* had been tripped in good earnest.

She was squarely upside down. Many things can run riotously through a man's mind in moments of stress. Thornton felt certain that the rotten canvas had been whipped out of the spars by the blast, leaving the schooner no brace to hold her on her beam ends when she rolled.

Captain Candage was spouting, floundering, and bellowing his fears somewhere near at hand. He was calling for his daughter in piteous fashion.

"Are you drowned, Polly, darling?" he shouted.

"I have her safe, sir," Thornton assured him. "Stand on a beam. You can get half of yourself above water."

"It's all over," gasped the captain. "We're spoke for. Oh, my Polly, why did I ever bring you to a place like this?"

Thornton found the girl very quiet, and put a hand on her face.

She did not move under his touch.

"She has fainted, sir."

"She's dead! She's dead!" blubbered the skipper, splashing his way across the cabin to Thornton.

"She's all right—she's breathing!" the young man assured him. "Take her, captain. Hold her up. I'll see if anything can be done."

"Nothing can be done," whimpered Candage. "We're goners!"

He was indorsed in that opinion by Dolph and Otie, who were moaning their fears in childish falsetto.

Thornton was not particularly hopeful as he stood there for a few moments, pondering on the desperate plight. But a young sailor who still finds his head above water in an emergency is bound to keep battling, for the adage of the coastwise sailorman is: "Don't die till Davy Jones gets his final pinch in your wizen!"

The *Polly* had been whipped over so quickly that she had been transformed into a sort of diving bell—that is to say, a considerable amount of air had been captured, and was now retained in her. It was compressed by the water which forced up from below through windows and shattered skylight. The pressure on Thornton's temples made him understand that the air was held prisoner. The *Polly* was floating, and he felt that she would continue to float for some time. But this prospect did not insure life or safety to those unfortunates trapped in her bowels. The air would either escape or soon become vitiated by their breathing. There was only one thing to do: take advantage of any period of truce the ancient enemy, the sea, allowed.

A sailor, prey of hazards and victim of the unexpected in the everlasting moods of the ocean, must needs be master of expedients and emergencies.

"Where are your tools—a saw, a chisel?" demanded Thornton.

"In the lazar*eet,*" groaned Otie.

The lazaret in a coaster is the storeroom under the quarter-deck—the repository of odds and ends.

"Any way to get at it except through the deck hatch?"

"There's a door back of the companionway ladder."

Thornton, thrusting past the ladder, set his shoulders against the steps and pushed at the door with his feet. He forced it open, and waded into the storeroom. It was a blind search, for he had no means of determining where the tools had been tossed when the schooner rolled over. He reflected that they must have been loose on the floor and were now loose somewhere on the ceiling; he understood the habits of hit-or-miss coasting crews. He pushed his feet

about, hoping to tread on something that felt like saw or chisel.

"Don't any of you have any idea in what part of this lazaret the tools were?" he called.

"Guess they was just throwed in," stated Otie, breaking off a fervent prayer he was uttering. His tone indicated that he was taking scant interest in this hunt for tools.

Thornton found so much ruck about his feet that he finally abandoned his search.

But as he groped his way back to the cabin his hand came in contact with the inside of the door of the lazaret. In leather loops on the door were saw, ax, chisel, and hammer.

"You infernal fool, why didn't you tell me the tools were on this door in beckets?"

"I forgot—and my mind ain't on tools, anyway," mourned the mate.

When Thornton waded past Captain Candage, his booty in his arms, he heard the old skipper trying to comfort his daughter, weeping as he talked.

"We're going to die—we're going to die," the girl moaned, over and over.

"Please keep up courage a little while, Miss Candage," pleaded Thornton.

"But there's no hope for us."

"There's hope as long as we've got air and a little grit," he declared stoutly. "Now tell me, mate, how thick is this bulkhead between the cabin and the hold?"

"It's only sheathing between the beams."

"You two men help me!" commanded Thornton.

Otie broke off his prayer once more.

"What's the use?" he demanded, with temper that his fright made childish. "We're spoke for, just as sure as hell will heat a hand spike."

"It ain't no use to try to row a biskit across a puddle of molasses with a couple of toothpicks," whimpered Dolph, with cook's metaphor of hopelessness.

"You two men wade across here to me," shouted Thornton, "or I'll come to you with an ax in one hand and a hammer in the other. I mean business."

They came, muttering. But they knew the ring of desperate resolve in a man's tone when they heard it.

Thornton, feeling that they were close, hearing their stertorous breathing, shoved tools into their hands, retaining hammer and chisel for himself.

"That's about all I can use you for—tool racks," he growled. "See that you don't drop those."

The upturned schooner rolled slowly, and her sluggish motion swashed the water in her cabin, making footing insecure.

"If I tumble down I'll have to drop 'em," whined Dolph.

"You drop those and I'd advise you not to come to the surface again," stated Thornton, beginning to tap on the sheathing. "Drowning will be an easier death than the one I'll hand you."

His hammer taps quickly showed where the upright beams were located on the opposite side of the sheathing.

He was not as sanguine as his activity and his tone to the men might have indicated. He realized that any escape must be made through the bottom of the vessel amidships, where, wallowing though she was, there would be some little freeboard. He felt that at least her keel and garboard streaks would be above water. There could be no escape through the bottom of the cabin; he knew he would find her counter and buttock well under water.

"Have you a full cargo below decks?" he asked.

"No," stated Captain Candage, in a tone which hinted that he could not understand what difference that made in the straits in which they were.

Thornton had feared what the an-

swer might be; he expected that the *Polly's* hold would be found stuffed full of lumber. Now he felt a bit of fresh courage.

"How did it ever happen that you didn't plug the trap you set for us?" he ended sarcastically.

"Could only get two-thirds cargo below because the lumber was so long—rest on deck," explained the captain listlessly.

"Oh, yes, piled it all on deck so as to make her top heavy—so as to make sure of catching us," persisted Thornton, beginning to work hammer and chisel on the sheathing.

"That ain't no such thing!" declared the skipper, missing the irony. "Them shingles and laths is packet freight and has got to be delivered this side of New York. Expect me to overhaul a whole deck lo'd so as to——"

"Not now," broke in Thornton, "and I don't believe you will have to do it later. The Atlantic Ocean has attended to that matter for you."

He drove his chisel through the sheathing as close to the cabin floor as he could. Remembering that the schooner was upside down this brought him nearest to the bilge. When he had made a hole large enough for a start, he secured the saw from the mate and sawed a square opening.

Then he crawled through and found what he hoped for: the partial cargo of lumber in the hold had settled to the deck and left almost three feet of space between the cargo and the bottom of the vessel. When Thornton lifted himself through the aperture he found himself out of the water.

"Come here with your daughter, Captain Candage," he called. "It's dry in here."

He kneeled and put his hands through the opening, directing them with his voice, reaching into the pitchy darkness until her hands found his, and then he brought her up to him and in upon the lumber.

"This is a little better—not much," he told her. "Sit at one side so that the men can crawl past you. I'll need them to help me."

"Do you think we shall die?" she whispered.

"Not just yet."

"But here—in the dark—in this trap—crowded up in this little hole!" Her voice broke. "Aren't you frightened, Captain Thornton?"

"Yes, I am," he returned frankly. Captain Candage was grunting through the opening that had been sawed. "And there are lots of cases where a frightened man has done more to get out of a scrape than the fool who doesn't know enough to be good and scared."

"But my father and his men are scared, and they did nothing to help us."

"Oh, folks have different ways of acting in tight places. Perhaps I was scared most, and that's why I jumped around so much."

He had released her hands—but a plump little fist sought his palm in the darkness.

"You're a brave man, Captain Thornton," said Polly, of the *Polly*, "and before we die here in this terrible place I want to thank you."

"Why—if you think we are going to die?"

"For giving me courage to die without whining. I was making a fool of myself a little while ago."

"Poor little girl," he said, patting her hand. "I didn't know it was in girls to be as brave as you are." He began to crawl away. "You've given me new grit."

"I know what will happen now," wailed Captain Candage, from the gloom. "A cussed revenue cutter will come along in a little while, as soon as it gets daylight, and will blow us up

with a bomb without bothering to find out what's under this turtle shell."

"You infernal old idiot," stormed the young man, "is that all you've got to do, think up what *may* happen to us? Isn't there enough happening, as it is?"

Thornton crawled along the lumber until touch and sense of locality told him that he was amidship.

"What's your sheathing on the ribs?" he asked.

"Inch and a half spruce, if I remember right."

"I suppose she's ribbed about every twelve inches?"

"About that."

"Get forward, here, the three of you, and have those tools handy."

He went at the sheathing with hammer and chisel. It was blind work, but he managed to knock away a few square feet of the spruce boarding after a time.

"Bring me that saw, whoever's got it!" he ordered.

A hand fumbled to his in the dark and gave him the tool. He began on one of the oak ribs. It was difficult and tedious work, for he could use only the tip of the saw because the ribs were so close together.

At last the sound of his diligence animated the others, and when he rested for a moment Captain Candage offered to help with the sawing.

"I'll have to do it alone," said Thornton. "You can't tell in the dark where I've left off. But I'm glad to see that you're coming back to your senses."

"I reckon me and Otie and Dolph have acted pretty pussylaminous," confessed the skipper, struggling with the big word. "But we ain't as young as we was once, and I'll leave it to you if this wasn't something that nobody had ever reckoned on. I'm sorry we yanked you into this trouble," he added placatingly. "No, I ain't, either. If you hadn't been along we'd never have got out of this scrape."

"We haven't got out of it yet, Captain Candage."

"Well, we're making an almighty good start, and I want to say in the hearing of all that you're the smartest cuss I ever saw afloat."

"I hope you'll forgive father," breathed the girl from the darkness. She was so near him that her voice startled Thornton. "I don't mean to get in your way, but I feel safer if I'm close to you."

"We'll be Yankee sailormen together from now on," agreed Thornton heartily. "And if we're the right sort, we'll put this little girl where she belongs—on God's solid ground."

CHAPTER V.

A JOB FOR A REAL MAN.

The ship's rib was tough—the oak was old, and the work of sawing with merely the tip of the blade in play was hard. He rested when he had sawed the rib in four places, and told Otie to knock away as much of the oak as he could with hammer and chisel. The removal of this section of rib would allow room for a hole at least two feet square—and there were no extraordinary girths in the party. The mate had sturdy arms and worked desperately, encouraged now by the prospect of release from their prison.

Crouching there, Thornton realized that the air was becoming vitiated. His temples throbbed, and his ears rang.

"Her bottom can't be awash with all this lumber in her," said Captain Candage. "If we could only get a little hole through the outside planking for fresh air, I reckon we'd better do it. I feel like a bug under a thimble."

"That's what I've been doing," confided Otie. He had been chiseling industriously for some time. "After we get some air we can take our time about gouging out this rib."

The next instant his chisel plunged

through the planking and there was a hiss like escaping steam. Thornton understood what that meant, and yelled an oath. He was kneeling close beside the mate, and set hands upon him and threw him back. Then he planted his palm with all haste against the crack through which the wan light filtered. The tremendous pressure held his hand as though it were clamped against the planks—but the hissing ceased.

The schooner, as she lay, was practically a diving bell, and with that hole in her shell their safety was jeopardized. The girl was quickest to understand their plight, and she thrust some sort of fabric into Thornton's disengaged hand, frenziedly seeking it.

"It's from my petticoat," she gasped. "Can you calk with it?"

"Hand me that chisel," he cried.

When he had possessed himself of it he managed to work his hand free from the crack to which it was pressed and drove the fabric into the opening, crowding it home with the blade of the tool.

"I'll do the rest of this job without help," he growled.

"Wasn't that air rushing in?" inquired Dolph.

"You fool, it was rushing out so fast that we would have been flattened against her planks in a few minutes by this lumber."

He investigated the cut that had been made by the incautious mate, and found that the schooner's bottom planks were three inches thick. He understood now that he had a ticklish job in front of him. The planks must be gouged around the complete square of the proposed opening so that the section could be driven out with a blow from beneath. In that plan lay their only hope of rescue, and in that pitchy blackness he had only his fingers to guide him. But he set bravely at work, crouching on his knees and hammering the chisel head above him.

All were silent. All felt the initial languor of suffocation. Thornton, working, perspiration streaming down into his eyes, felt the lack of air most, but desperation nerved him. He found that Otie had nearly cleared out the rib, and he finished that job first. Then he gouged close to the other parallel ribs. Increasing torpor descended upon him. He heard the others gasping. But every now and then he felt a little tap on his shoulder. He knew what that was—it was the girl's reassuring hand, and he rejoiced to know that she was keeping her courage in that horrible crisis.

He beveled the planks as far as he dared, and had at last made his cut along three sides of the square.

"Take that saw, one of you, and saw off two or three short lengths of lumber and stand ready with 'em to batter out this planking," he commanded. The rasp of the hand saw told him that somebody was at work.

His eyes were propped wide open in the blackness; queerly colored flames seemed to shoot before him. He toiled in partial delirium, and it seemed to him that he was witnessing again the phantasmagoria of the Coston lights on the fog when the yachtsmen were serenading the girl of the *Polly*. He even found himself muttering between set teeth:

"Our Polly O,
O'er the sea you go——"

He wanted to throw down his tools and scream and kick and throw himself against the planks above him; on the other side was air; and the open was there. But he had not finished the fourth side of his square.

Then came that reassuring little pat on his shoulder, and with it the comfort of knowing that a girl had faith in him and was still courageous. He groaned and kept on.

He wondered how long he had been

at work. The lapse of time had ceased to have significance. Every now and then the hammer slipped and bruised his hand, but he did not mind the hurt. Both tools wavered in his grasp. He struck a desperate, despairing blow, and hammer and chisel dropped. He knew he had not finished the fourth side. He fell across the girl's lap, and she raised him to his knees.

"All together with those joists," he gasped. "Strike together. Right above my head. Strike hard—and together."

He heard the voice of the skipper count one—two—three! He heard the concerted blow. The planks did not give way.

"It's your lives!" he cried.

"Here's one for you, Thornton!" said Candage—and the bit of lumber was thrust into his grasp.

Once again they drove their battering-rams up against the prisoning roof, and the glory of light flooded into their blinking eyes. The section gave way!

They went up and out, almost as a cork pops from a bottle. Thornton was first, and he dragged the girl with him. He felt the rush of the imprisoned air past him as he went. He hardly knew how he got out, but the lumber in the hold pushed him and the others through the opening. He found himself clinging to the barnacled keel, his arm holding the girl from sliding down the slimy bottom into the sea.

"Great guns! We've been there all night!" bawled Captain Candage. He lay sprawled on the bottom of the *Polly*, his hornbeam hands clutching the keel, his face upraised to the skies that were flooded with the glory of the morning. Otie and Dolph were beside him, mouths open, gulping in air as if they were fish freshly snaked from the depths of the ocean.

There was a long silence after the skipper's ejaculation.

The five persons who lay there on the bottom of the overset schooner stared at the sun in its cloudless sky and off across the sea whose blue was shrouded by the golden dust of a perfect day. Only a lazy roll was left of the sudden turbulence of the night before. A listless breeze with a fresh tang of salt in it lapped the surface of the surges into ripples which twinkled with facets that sported with the sunlight.

The long silence was broken by Captain Epps Candage.

"I ain't a member of no church, never having felt the need of joining, and not being handy where I could tend out. But I ain't ashamed to say before witnesses that I've just been telling God, as best I know how, that I'm going to be a different man after this—different and better according to my best lights."

"I believe you have spoken for all of us, Captain Candage," said Thornton. "I thank you."

CHAPTER VI.

HOSPITALITY, PER ADAMS.

It was plain that the *Polly* had made offing at a lively pace during her chase under the impetus of the easterly.

Thornton balanced himself on the keel and took a long survey of the horizon. In one place a thread of blue, as delicate as the tracery of a vein on a girl's arm, hinted at land, but without a glass he was not sure. There was not a sign of any other craft; the storm had driven all coasters to harbor—there had been no wind as yet to help them out to sea. But he was sure that something—some yacht or sea wagon—would come rolling up over the rim of the ocean before long. The breeze was puffing from the southwest, and would invite shipping to spread canvas.

Only the oval of the schooner's broad bilge showed above the water, and the old *Polly* was so flat and tubby that their floating islet afforded only scant freeboard.

Thornton shoved his arm down the hole from which they had escaped, and, after groping, found the hatchet. Some of the short bits of lumber with which they had battered were also in reach. He busied himself in making these into large wedges which he drove into cracks between the planks near the keel.

"It may come sloppy when this sou'-wester gets its gait on," he suggested to the skipper. "We'll have something to hang to."

The gloss of Skipper Candage's radiant thankfulness was now dulled a bit by his sailorman's second thought.

"We may have to hang to something longer'n we reckon on. We're too far off for the coasters and too far in for the big fellers. And unless something comes pretty close we can't be seen no more'n as if we was mussels on a tide rock."

"If we could only work out one of those long joists," sighed Thornton. But the hole was too small.

"I think there's a piece of lumber floating over there," cried the girl, who had been peering under her plump hand. "Wait! It's down in a hollow just now."

Pretty quick the sea lifted it again. Thornton saw it was a long strip of scantling, probably a part of the deck load that the *Polly* had jettisoned when she was tripped. It lay to windward—but how was the tide? Thornton squinted at the sun, did a moment's quick reckoning from his memory of the tide time of the day before, and smiled.

"We'll get that," he declared. "She's coming this way."

Watching it, waiting for it, helped pass the time. And when at last it came washing alongside they secured it, braced it in the hole in the bottom, and raised on its end the remnant of the girl's petticoat that she gave to Thornton, her face showing a pretty touch of pink confusion.

Then there was nothing to do except wait, everlastingly squinting across the bright sea to the horizon's edge.

Thornton saw the sail first. It was something coming in from the sea, and was very far and minute.

"I reckon it's a fisherman bound in from Cashes Banks. He's laying over to a good breeze, and ought to come near enough to see us," was the young man's hopeful comment.

That little sail, nicked against the sky, was something else to watch and wait for, and they forgot, almost, that they were hungry, and thirsty, and sun-parched.

But Thornton kept *his* gaze most steadfastly on the horizon landward. He did not hint at what he was thinking, not wishing to rouse false hopes. However, it was in his mind that no matter what might be the sentiment of Marston Adams in regard to his skipper, the mate and engineer aboard the *Olena* were loyal friends who would use all their influence with the owner to urge him to come seeking the man who had been lost.

The fact that a motor boat had chased from Saturday Cove, popping out into the fog in pursuit of the hidden schooner, suggested that they guessed what had happened and were not engaged in dragging Saturday Cove for his body.

Thornton had plenty of time for speculation, and hope spiced his own guess that the yacht would get out early, nose into a few harbors where a gale-ridden schooner might have dodged for shelter, and then would chase down the sea, following the probable course of a schooner that had been caught in a nor'easter. That mate was a sailorly man, and he knew a thing or two, and he was not the sort who would abandon a chum, even if he had to convert an owner—so Thornton pondered.

Therefore he was elated rather than astonished when he saw a smear of

drab smoke and was able to determine that the craft which puffed it was heading out to sea, not crawling along shore.

"That's a fisherman, all right, and he's going to make us out," stated Captain Candage, his gaze to southward.

"But here comes another fellow who's going to beat him to us," announced Thornton, his eyes to the north.

"A dude yacht, just like as not, will go right past and thumb their nose at us. Think we're out here on a fishing picnic, mostlike. That's about all they know."

"I reckon this one is different," said Thornton, smiling at the girl who was frowning protest at her father. "If I'm not much mistaken, that's yacht *Olena* hunting for *me*."

A quarter of an hour later he was able to assure them that it was the *Olena*. His mate and engineer had been loyal. He found himself wondering what were the sentiments of Marston Adams in the matter.

After a time—the long time that even a fast yacht takes to cover distance to effect a rescue of those who are anxious—the yacht hooted hoarsely to say that they had been seen.

"Well, I'll say good-by, Captain Thornton," began Skipper Candage, "hoping that as things have turned out there won't be no hard feelings either one way or the other. Seeing I have lost my schooner——"

"Good-by?" demanded the young man. "What are you saying good-by for now?"

"Because you are going aboard your yacht."

"The rest of you are going there, too."

"It ain't for poor critters like us to go mussing——"

"I'm captain of that yacht, sir, and you're coming aboard with me, and you'll be set down at a handy port."

"I'd just as soon wait for the fisherman. I'd feel more at home."

"You ought to think of your daughter's condition first, Captain Candage. She needs some comforts mighty quick, and she won't find them on board a fisherman."

He turned to the girl. Color came into his cheeks under his tan. There was embarrassment in his eyes, a queer hesitancy in his tones. She stared at him with some surprise, for this demeanor was new to him.

"There is a young lady on board the yacht—Mr. Adams' daughter—Miss Leah Adams;" he caressed the name with his tones as it came from his lips, and the girl flushed even as deeply as he, for a woman has an intuition in matters of the heart that a man fails to possess. "She will be very kind to you, Miss Candage."

"I'll be grateful," she said, "but perhaps we'd be better off on the fishing schooner—father and the rest of us."

"I insist," he broke in, resuming the decisiveness that was natural to him.

The *Olena* came close aboard and swung to, and her crew dropped a tender from her port davits. As she rolled on the surge, her brass rails caught the sun in long flashes that blinded the hollow eyes of the castaways. The white bridge canvas gleamed like a bank of snow. They on the barnacled hulk of the *Polly*, faint with hunger, bedraggled with brine, unkempt and wholly miserable from fatigue, felt like beggars at a palace gate as they gazed on her. Insolence seemed to exude from her. Thornton, her captain though he was, felt it more keenly than his companions. He had had bitter and recent experience.

He could see Mr. Adams plainly. The transportation magnate was pacing the port alley, the eternal cigar plugging his face. Close beside the gangway stood Leah Adams, spotless in her white duck. Each time her father turned his back on her she reached clasped hands to Thornton and then

swept tears from her cheeks with her handkerchief. The girl by Thornton's side stared frankly at the girl on the yacht and stole side glances at the rapt face of her companion.

The mate came himself with the tender. His honest face was working with emotion as the oarsmen eased the boat gingerly against the hulk.

"Haven't closed my eyes, Captain Thornton. Stayed up all night to figure it out. Tried Lumbo and two other shelters and then chased the trail of the blow."

"I was looking for you, Bangs, an hour before your smoke showed," returned Thornton. "You see, I know what kind of a chap you are."

They clasped hands and stood thus holding the tender close to the wreck while the passengers embarked.

When they reached the *Olena's* ladder, Captain Thornton sent his pathetic guests ahead.

Adams scowled at them as they came aboard, and Blake, the magnate's boon companion, strolled to the rail and surveyed them with indifference.

Leah Adams had eyes only for one person in the tender—her gaze never left Thornton's face. He exchanged looks with her as he came up the ladder. His stare of love, commiseration, and greeting was like putting a match to a magazine; she was overwrought, half crazed by the agony of a night of fears. The moment he came within reach she flung herself upon him and kissed him.

"I don't care! I want the world to know it," she wailed between her kisses. "I love you. I defy them all. They can't take me from you. I love you, my boy—my boy!"

A more tremendous oath never echoed across the sea than came from the purple lips of Adams.

He seemed to be paralyzed for a moment. This scene, with the whole crew of his yacht looking on with mouths agape, fairly stunned him.

"If you had died I would have died," cried the weeping girl.

Adams plunged toward her. But when his rough hands seized her shoulders, Thornton pushed him violently away. Then he kissed the girl on the forehead, unhooked her arms from about his neck, and gently thrust her past him along the alley, placing himself between her and her father.

"Take me, Mr. Adams, if you want to beat up somebody. I'm to blame in this."

But Adams did not advance on this resolute young man whose mien suggested that he was in no pleasant frame of mind himself. He remained at a distance and cursed.

The men were getting ready to hoist the tender on the davits. Adams interrupted his anathema long enough to order the boat again to the ladder.

"Get back into that boat, you low-lived ragamuffins," he shouted, pushing first at Otie, the skipper of the *Polly,* and Dolph. But when he raised his hand to Polly Candage, Thornton caught his wrist and gave it a turn that brought a yell of pain from the enraged owner.

"Knock this mucker down—what am I hiring you for?" roared Adams, but the crew kept back. "He isn't your captain. He's fired. He's nothing but a trespasser. Throw him overboard."

"I'll go without being thrown, Mr. Adams. Set us aboard that fisherman."

The little schooner was almost within hailing distance.

"Mate, will you pick my little things up in my stateroom?" asked Thornton. "I'll stay here on deck to make sure that my friends are not abused."

Leah Adams fled aft when her lover put her away from himself. She was kneeling on the quarter-deck, her face hidden in her hands, and was sobbing bitterly.

Blake patrolled the deck near by her,

his flushed face dour; every few moments he paused beside a table and sipped whisky from a tall glass in which the steward had brought a high ball.

The castaways of the *Polly,* except Thornton, were back in the tender when the mate came up with the captain's belongings. The young man took them in his arms and went down the ladder with a bound.

"Get onto the bridge, Bangs, hail that schooner, and tell her we're headed straight for New York and can't be bothered by these tramps," commanded Adams.

But Mr. Bangs politely censored that proclamation and request when he put his mouth to the megaphone. The tender was already on its way to the fisherman, whose skipper returned hearty hail and declared that he'd be mighty glad to help sailors in trouble.

Thornton turned his head once and looked back at the yacht. Adams was standing in front of his daughter, flourishing his arms, and Blake was again sipping his whisky. The young man resolutely set his face the other way; his lips were white, and his eyes were hard. Then he felt the pat of a little hand on his clenched fist.

He cast a swift glance at her. In the look she gave him was all of woman's innate, sympathetic understanding, and it heartened and comforted him more than any words.

The fisherman had come into the wind, rocking on the long swell, her sails flapping. Her skipper was leaning over the rail, helping to rig the ladder.

"We're much obliged for that invite you gave us aboard the yacht, Cap'n Thornton," said Skipper Candage, "and we know that if things had been different you would have used us all hunky. But, after all, my first thought was right"—he pointed to the fishing captain's rubicund and welcoming countenance—"we're now with real friends. I never liked a yacht, nor the dudes that sail on 'em—and I never will."

He went over the schooner's rail, beginning his story as he climbed, and the others followed.

"We'll desert that old grampus in New York, captain," whispered one of the tender's oarsmen. "When you get another job, we want to ship with you."

The schooner lurched away on her shoreward tack, and the yacht stalked off down the sea—and Thornton lay down in the sun in the lee alley, his head on his arms, and thought bitter thoughts till blessed sleep overcame him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PASSER FROM HUE AND CRY.

Thornton, faint with hunger though he was, refused food when he came aboard the *Reuben and Esther.* Fatigue and grief overmastered him.

But when he woke, the watchful and obsequious cook brought hot coffee and a plate heaped high. Captain Candage came to him as he ate, and sat down beside him. Gloom had settled on the captain again.

"Have lost a schooner that has been my home ever since I was big enough to heave my dunnage bag over the rail, and not a cent of insurance. What do you think of my chances if I hire a towboat and try to salvage?"

"Pretty poor. Claims will eat up all she's worth. Besides, you have those yachtsmen to deal with—those you sideswiped. I looked her bottom over while I sat there, Captain Candage, and her hundred years have told on her."

"I hate to let her go."

"That's natural. But I have an idea that she'll be reported as a menace to navigation and be blown up by a revenue cutter before you'd get around to try salvage."

"When a man is down they all jump on him," complained the skipper.

"I can agree with you, sir," stated Captain Thornton.

The old man gave him a keen side glance.

"She showed grit—that girl of old Adams'."

"Furl sail on that topic, captain," said Thornton, with sailor bluntness.

"I only said it complimentary. A lot of girls has got grit—my poor little girl has got it. I was just down watching her asleep in the cap'n's bunk. Made the tears come into my eyes, sir, to think what she went through, account of my blamed foolishness. It was to get her away from a feller that was courting her."

"Somebody who wasn't good enough for her, sir?"

"Oh, I don't say that. But I don't like to have her courted. Now, there ain't no reason why old Adams should pile it onto you the way he did. You're good enough for his girl. But with me —well——" the skipper halted, at a loss how to explain himself, and fiddled his finger under his nose.

"It may be the same way with you, Captain Candage. If your daughter is in love with a worthy young man, you are making a great mistake in assuming to know what is best for her. And you will please understand that I'm not referring to my own case, nor bringing my own affairs into this business in any way."

"I'll go and look that young feller over again," said the captain, taking a moment for meditation. "Mebbe after what has happened I'll change my mind."

It was not a topic that Thornton cared to pursue. He shifted it by asking what port the fisherman proposed to make. The shore was already close aboard.

"He's going to take his shack fish up to the big market. But I've asked him to set me ashore at Maquit. Might as well be there as anywhere till I know what I'm going to do."

"Well, I reckon I'll go ashore there, too, and for the same reason," said the young man. "There's no sense in going up to the city just now."

The hearty skipper of the fisherman came rolling into the alley, and flapped disparagingly a hand that resembled a split codfish when Thornton tried to thank him for the trouble he was taking.

"Trouble? It ain't none. Was going to call into Maquit to ice up, anyway. And even if I wasn't, I know my manners better'n old Mart Adams. I hope next time you hire you'll go to work for a *man,* Captain Thornton. We'd like to see you back in the fishing business again."

"I guess it's more like man's work, Captain Sinnett," declared the young man, with bitterness.

An hour later they stepped ashore on the ice-house wharf at Maquit. The place was a straggling hamlet at the head of a cove which nicked the coast line. Captain Candage, familiar with every port of call, led his party straight to the home of a worthy widow, whose husband he had known in the coasting trade, and drove a shrewd bargain with her for their board.

"I like to get into a place like this that ain't been spoiled by them cussed rusticators and their prices," he confided to Thornton, exhibiting a wallet that was well stuffed with bills. "I ain't busted, not by a long shot, but there's no sense in paying more'n five dollars a week for a man's vittles. She'll make plenty off'n us as it is—I may stay here till something turns up for me."

Thornton, who had inquired about Maquit and its transportation facilities, determined in his own mind that he would leave the place the next day by the stage. He had no definite plans, and his soul was in a turmoil as he pondered on the desperate plight in

which lay his affairs with Leah Adams. His own woe was bitter enough, but he grieved most over the persecution to which she must now submit.

He sat on the porch of the widow's house, looking into the sunset and revolving the matter.

Polly Candage came timidly and sat down beside him.

"I know you don't want me to talk to you, Captain Thornton."

"I'll listen to you gratefully, any time."

"But I'm only a poor country girl—I don't know how to say it—how to tell you how sorry I am for you."

"That little pat on my hand to-day told me better than words."

"It's all I can think about—your unhappiness."

"That touches me, that you can forget your own sorrow enough to busy your mind with mine. You are a good girl."

"My own sorrow?" she demanded, her eyes wide.

"Your father told me—I tried to stop him, but he told me—and I have some consolation for you. He says he thinks he may change his mind and allow you to marry your young man. I'm glad he has come to his senses."

She arose and stamped her foot, red flaming into her cheeks.

"My father dared to tell you that?"

"I am sorry he did it—it is none of my business—but I do wish you happiness."

"But there is no——"

Then she checked herself, much confused. It was on her lips to tell him that there was no young man—that her father had foolishly mistaken a girl's innocent goings and comings. She did not know just why she did not protest to this young man that she was heart whole. But the picture of him, as he had stood that day with a girl's arms about his neck, came to her. A strange feeling of pride stopped her intended confession. She sat down.

"I—I am glad my father is going to let me marry—the—the—young man," she stammered. "He is a very fine young man. And I do hope that some day you can have the girl you love. I wish I could help you. Do you want me to talk to you about her—tell you how dear and pretty I think she is?"

"No. It hurts me too dreadfully. But you understand—I know you do—that I love her for herself, not for her money."

"I do understand."

"I hope I may meet the young man you love. I want to congratulate him. He must be——"

"Let's not talk about him—that hurts *me*," she pleaded, a queer little quaver in her voice.

And on that truce—a stranger one than he realized—they fell to chat on more prosaic affairs.

They were interrupted after a time. A man who wore rubber boots and a cap that was slouched over one ear, loafed up to the porch and sat down on its edge, with bland indifference to all formality.

"This world is full of trouble," he observed, and then began to inspect a plug of tobacco in search of the likeliest corner for a bite.

"It seems to be," agreed Thornton.

"Them that's down get kicked farther down."

"Also true, very often."

"Take your case—it's bad. I've just heard the story. But ours is worse." The stranger pointed to an island which the cove held in its jaws. "The man who named that Hue and Cry Island must have known what would happen there some day."

He bit into the plug, and chewed until his silence became aggravating.

"Well, what has happened?" asked Thornton.

"It ain't happened yet—it's going to."

Another silence.

"Tell us what's going to happen, can't you?"

"Of course I can, now you've asked me. I ain't no kind of a hand to do things 'less I'm asked. There's seventeen families of us on Hue and Cry, and they've told us to get off."

"Who told you?"

"The State—some big bugs that said the governor sent 'em, and they showed papers, and we've got to go."

"But you people have lived there for years!"

"My grandfather was one of the first settlers—most all of us that live there had grandfathers who settled the place. But some heirs have found papers that show they own the island—and the State has bought out the heirs, and now the State says get off. We're only squatters."

"But, great Scott! You must have squatter rights. Hire a lawyer. Fight 'em."

"We ain't got no money—ain't got no friends. Might fight heirs, but you can't fight the State—leastways poor cusses like us can't."

"Where are you going?"

"Well, we've taken town help—had to, or starve winters—we've had State aid, too, and they say that makes us paupers. Every town roundabouts has notified us that we can't settle there and gain pauper residence. Say the State has ordered us off, now let the State take care of us! But they won't let us settle nowhere on the main. Looks like we'd have to go up in balloons—but we hain't got no balloons. Got to move, though!"

"I never heard of such a thing!"

"Nor I, neither. But that ain't none surprising—we don't hear about much of anything on Hue and Cry till they come and tell us. I've got a house bo't to take my wife and young ones on, and we'll keep on digging clams for trawlers—sixty cents a bucket, shucked—and we can shuck a bucket a day. We won't starve. But I pity the poor critters that hain't got a house bo't. They'll need wings. As for me, I ain't worrying. State has allowed me a hundred and fifty dollars for my house on Hue and Cry—I had the best one. I consider I'm well fixed." Then the plutocrat of the unhappy tribe rose and strolled off, plainly reconciled to the fate that had made him and his family and kin wanderers on the face of the waters. "In the case of human critters, if it ain't one thing, it's another," he called back. "We've got to have trouble, anyway, and it might just as well be this as anything."

"Why, that's an awful thing to happen to those people," the girl declared. "I must say he takes it calmly."

"He's a fair sample of some of the human jellyfish I've found hidden away in odd corners along the coast. Not enough mind and spirit left to resent anything that happens or fight for his own protection. But a thing like this is almost unbelievable. I'll find somebody who knows more about it than that clam-digging machine."

At that moment a man strolled past, smoking his after-supper cigar. The dusk had deepened, but Thornton could see that this person wore clothes of city smartness.

"I beg your pardon, sir," called the young man, "but do you know anything about the inwardness of this affair on Hue and Cry?"

"I can tell you *all* about it," stated the person thus hailed. He sauntered up and sat down on the edge of the porch, with the air of a man who was killing time. "I'm in charge of the thing."

"Not of putting those people off?"

"Sure! That's what I'm here for. I'm a State agent on pauper affairs, acting for the governor and council. The State has bought that island from the real heirs, has ordered off those squatters, and we shall burn down their

shacks and clear the land up. State has already had an offer for the island from a New York party who will buy it for a summer place."

He flicked the ash from his cigar and broke in on Thornton's indignant question regarding the State's purpose.

"Had to be done—had to be done! They've intermarried there till most of the children are fools. There ain't a summer cottage for twenty miles along the coast that they haven't broken into. They steal everything on the main that isn't nailed down. They have set false beacons winters, and have wrecked coasters. Every few weeks some city newspaper has written 'em up as wild men, and it has given the State a bad name. We're going to break up the nest."

"But where will they go?"

"The State is going to take the fools to the School for the Feeble-minded. Let the others get out and go to work at something honest."

"But the poor devils are starting with too much of a handicap. They have been there for three generations—they don't know how to get a living on the main."

"That's their own lookout, not the State's. State doesn't guarantee to give shiftless folks a living."

"But the State ought to use a little common sense in dealing with such people as live on Hue and Cry."

The commissioner rose and dusted off his trousers.

"Better not say too much to *me,*" he suggested. "I investigated for the governor and council, and they're acting on my recommendation. You might just as well advise nursing and coddling a nest of brown-tail moths as talk of letting these people keep on breeding thieves. We are not keeping show places of this kind along coast for city folks to go away and talk about."

He walked off.

Thornton proceeded to stride up and down the porch, muttering some emphatic opinions in regard to the intellects of rulers.

"I know the kind of people who live on that island, Miss Candage. I've seen other cases along shore. They are blamed for what they don't know. Poor devils! First a lot of amateur coast missionaries will load them down with stuff that has been solicited from sentimental folks, and will make them think the world owes them a living; and next will come along some chap like that man who prides himself on being straight business, and he'll put the screws to 'em. They're like grist between two millstones. Nobody to help them in the real, right way. I pity them."

"I live in the country, and I know how unfeeling the boards of selectmen are in pauper cases," said the girl. "When it's a case of saving money for the voters, they don't care much how poor folks get along."

Thornton continued to patrol the porch.

"I'm in a pretty rebellious state of mind, I reckon," he declared at last. "Seems to me 'most everybody is getting kicked just now. I'm smarting some, myself. I've got a fellow feeling for the oppressed.' He laughed, but there was no joviality in it.

"It's the little children who will suffer in this, Miss Condage," he went on. "They're not to blame—they don't understand. I intended to take the stage to-morrow and get out of here. Just now—being one of the oppressed, myself—I have a good mind to stay over and see what happens when that gentleman who represents our grand old State undertakes to scatter those folks to the four winds."

"I was hoping you'd stay, Captain Thornton."

He paused in his patrol, and stared at her through the gloom.

"You see, I'd like to go down to that

island and—and I haven't my—my own boy to take me there."

"I'm a poor substitute for the young man you have picked out, Miss Candage, but I'm a good hand at the oars, and a careful man in a boat. I volunteer as your escort."

She came to him and put out her hand.

"I haven't thanked you yet for saving my life—saving us all, Captain Thornton. It's too holy a thing to put in words. But here's my hand—like a friend—like a sister—no, like a man!"

He clasped her hand and released it when her hold on his palm slackened.

She sobbed rather than said "Good night!" and ran away.

Captain Thornton gazed after her, a puzzled frown wrinkling his brow.

Then he stared out in the direction of Hue and Cry Island.

"There seem to be more things in this world than a spiked martingale that can pick a man up and keep him away from his own business," he mused. "I seem to be butting into a lot of stuff that's no affair of mine—and I can't seem to help myself."

CHAPTER VIII.

AN EXODUS OF THE HOPELESS.

Captain Epps Candage was promptly interested in the proposed expedition when the matter was broached to him at the breakfast table. He borrowed a dory, installed himself therein as chaperon, pressed Dolph and Otie as motive power, and gave the stern seat to his daughter and the young man.

Early as they were, the State's agent was there before them, puffing on a cigar, and making domiciliary visits. He was engaged in adjusting damages according to the law which allows squatters meager pay for "improvements" to land on which they have settled. He doled mere pittances to the unhappy dwellers on Hue and Cry, for their improvements consisted only of tottery shacks patched over and over with tarred paper and such flotsam as had been gathered from the sea. There was only one house on the island that was worthy of the name, and from this their uninvited guest of the evening before was carrying his scant household furnishings. His wife and children were helping.

He set down a battered table when he met Thornton and his little party.

"I'm the only one who can get away early and respectable," he said. "Took my one hundred and fifty and bought that house boat out there." It was a battered old ark that had served as a floating fish house at one time. "They can't drive me off'n the Atlantic Ocean. The others ain't hardly woke up to a reelizing sense they've all got to go, as yet. I'm getting away first, or else they'd all be trying to climb aboard my bo't like the folks done to Noah's ark when they woke up and reelized."

He marched on with his table, leading his flock to his refuge.

Most of the population of the island, men, women, and children, were out of doors. The men were listlessly following the State's commissioner on his rounds. There was no spirit of rebelliousness evident. They acted more like inquisitive sheep. They were of that abject variety of poor whites who expect to be put upon by those in authority. Even then, they did not seem to comprehend fully that they must leave the place.

"What do you men propose to do?" inquired Thornton, addressing a group.

"There ain't nothing we can do."

"But don't you understand that this man has power from the State? He is here to put you off this island."

"Oh, they've threated us before. Something has allus come up—we ain't been driv' off."

"What's the use of trying to beat anything sensible through the shells

of these quahaugs?" sputtered Captain Candage.

"Not much use," acknowledged the young man. "But look at the children!"

The poor waifs were huddled at one side, ragged, pitiful, wistful urchins—poor little snippets of girls. They did not understand, but they were overwhelmed by that terror which clutches upon childish imagination.

An old man sat upon an overturned clam hod and yawled a discordant miserere on a cracked fiddle. His eyes were wide and sightless. A woman who occasionally called him "father" was lugging out of their home the few articles of battered furniture they owned, and was piling the pathetic stuff about him. Their house was the upper part of a schooner's cabin—something the sea had cast up on Hue and Cry. When the woman entered and walked about within, she was bent nearly double. Dogs lurked here and there—slinking with canine instinct of fear for that which is untoward. The women seemed to realize most acutely—they were weeping.

Thornton and his party intercepted the one dominant figure in this scene—the State's commissioner.

But at the young man's first words the agent interrupted him arrogantly.

"Let's see—if I remember right, I had some talk with you last evening. Whom do you represent?"

"Myself."

"How do you fit into this?"

"I don't believe I do fit—I feel too many sharp corners. I merely want to ask another question or two—seeing that you represent the State."

"Go ahead."

"The State is rooting these people up—what is it going to do with them?"

"Put the fools into an institution and let the able-bodied ones go to work. The State proposes——"

"Just now let's leave the State out. The State doesn't know anything about this. The State usually doesn't know anything about what is done by its agents. You told me last night that this eviction idea was your own."

"Well, what if it is? I've investigated this thing—and the State is paying me."

"Then it comes down to business between us, man and man. You're wrong. You can't make over in a minute what it has taken three generations to bring about."

"You watch me. When I transact business, it gets transacted. I did intend to give 'em the rest of this week to pack up and get off! But now that you're saying I can't do a thing, I'll show you! I'll have 'em off here by nightfall, and every shack burned to the ground. That's the kind of a hustler I am."

"Do you mean you're going to rub it into these people because I've said something—trying to help 'em?"

"I'll show you, and I'll show them, that it isn't safe to monkey with the State when the State gets started."

"Oh, the State be blowed! This isn't the State—it's a case of your swelled head," exploded Thornton.

"Get off this island—you and your bunch!" commanded the irate agent.

"Put us off if you've got the muscle, you big blowhard," retorted the young man, the sense of his own recent wrongs making him readier for a quarrel with this person who was attempting insolent oppression of the helpless.

Though he knew he had not come out to Hue and Cry to volunteer as the champion of these poor folk, he realized promptly that he had been forced into the thing to some extent—for the agent had declared that this interference would make the case of the islanders harder. He caught a glimpse of Polly Candage's face. She had come close to him. Her eyes were flashing. She

was holding one of the frightened children by the hand.

Around the agent and Thornton's little party the island people came flocking.

"I don't want to interfere with your duty, provided you go about it in decent shape," declared Thornton. "I have no right to. But if you are angry with me, go ahead and have your quarrel with me—don't spit your spite on these poor devils."

"They go off to-day, and they go off because you have butted in," announced the commissioner, with an oath. "And I hope they'll ride you on a rail for what you've done to 'em."

That shifting of the responsibility for what was happening made Thornton furious in good earnest.

"You know very well that people on the main won't hire any of these men if they *are* able-bodied, Mr. Agent. Everybody is down on them. They'll be kicked from pillar to post—from this town to that. They'll be beggars and worse. They must drag these women and little children about with them. I'll expose you as a monster."

"That exposure will sound fine—blaming me for doing my duty as the governor and his council have ordered it," sneered the other. "As soon as I can get to a justice I'll swear out a warrant against you for interfering with a State officer." He turned away from Thornton, and flung the stub of his cigar to the ground. "Listen, you people! Get off this island, and get off quick. Anybody who is here at sunset will be arrested as a trespasser on State property—whether man, woman, or child. Now give three cheers for your meddling friend, here."

"We would if we had enough spirit left," whimpered a man in the throng. "He tried to speak up for us and help us, and that's more'n anybody else ever done in this world."

"It's wicked!" gasped Polly Candage. "These poor folks don't know any better—they're not to blame."

"You have listened to this man—now you listen to me, people," cried Thornton. "It isn't my style to get folks into a mess and then run away and leave 'em. Those of you who are kicked out by the State—all men, women, and children who are ready to go to work, come to me on the main at Maquit with what stuff you can bring in your dories. I'll be waiting for you ashore there. My name is Lawrence Thornton."

"I'll remember that name, myself," stated the angry agent. "I'll show you that you can't interfere with me."

"You have turned these folks loose on the world, and I'm going to give 'em a hand when they come across to where I am," retorted Thornton. "If you want to call that interference, come on. It will make great listening in court."

He thrust his way out of the crowd, not stopping to shake the grimy hands that were outstretched to him. His party followed him.

"Meet me yonder on the main, boys," he called back, with seaman's heartiness that they understood. "We'll see what can be done."

"Well, what in the blazes can be done?" growled Captain Epps Candage, on the way back to their dory. "I don't blame ye for sassing that skewangled old tywhoopus. I wanted to do it myself. But ye can't do nothing more sensible with them critters than ye could with a case of the smallpox."

"Father, Captain Thornton is the noblest man I ever knew," cried the girl, reproach in her tones.

"Bosh! I'm only getting back at that agent because he made me almighty mad," insisted the champion of the oppressed. "I'm apt to go off half cocked like that. You see, I've had a lot to rasp my nerves the last few days."

"But what *are* you going to do with

'em?" insisted the old skipper, his practicality at the fore.

"Blessed if I know," acknowledged the young man. "When I'm good and mad I don't stop to think."

"I've heard of adopting families, but I never heard of such a wholesale operation as this. If I was in your place, Thornton, I'd cut and run. I'll tell 'em you've been called away by—by a death in your family. And a death would be lucky beside of what's in prospect for you if you hang round."

"Oh, I'll hang round," declared Thornton.

They embarked, and Dolph and Otie, who had refrained from comment with sailors' taciturnity, began to row toward the main.

"You might auction 'em off to farmers for scarecrows," pursued the disgruntled skipper. "They ain't fit for no more active jobs than that kind."

"I hope you'll forgive father for talking this way," pleaded the girl. She raised brimming eyes to the gaze of the young man beside her. "He doesn't understand the way I do."

"I haven't done anything as yet but start trouble for 'em—and they had trouble enough before. I want to do a little something to square myself."

"There's a reward for good deeds—when you help those who can't help themselves. I believe what the Bible says about casting bread on the waters. It's going to return to you some day."

He smiled at her, but he was far from realizing that this pretty girl, whose eyes were so bright and whose cheeks were flushed with enthusiasm, was speaking to him with the tongue of a sibyl.

CHAPTER IX.

A CAPTAIN OF HUMAN FLOTSAM.

Captain Candage growled and grunted so persistently on the trip to the main that Thornton expected to be deserted promptly by that querulous skipper. But the skipper dogged his heels when he set off up the one street of the hamlet of Maquit.

"I can see that you have already thought of some plan," the girl murmured. "I do hope you'll allow me to go along and listen." He gave her his arm for answer.

"I haven't been into this port for some time, Captain Candage," said the young man, "but the last time I was here Rowley, who runs the general store, was first selectman."

"He still is. They've got the habit of electing him and can't break off. I'll introduce you—he's a friend of mine."

Mr. Rowley leaned over his counter and acknowledged the introduction.

But his smile faded and he clawed his chin beard nervously when Thornton informed him that he had invited the castaways of Hue and Cry to land on the main at Maquit that day.

"As overseer of the poor, I can't allow that, Captain Thornton."

"Do you still own that big fish house—the old sardine-canning plant?"

"Yes, sir."

"You're not using it now?"

"No, sir."

"And it isn't paying you any revenue?"

"No, sir."

"Then you ought to be willing to let it pretty cheap—monthly lease."

"Depends what for."

"I want to stow those poor people in there till I can arrange further for them—have this thing shown up to those in authority—get work for them, or something."

"No, sir," snapped the selectman.

To the astonishment of Thornton, Skipper Candage now came into the affair. He yanked out his fat wallet and slammed it on the counter.

"Look-a-here, Rowley, you know me. We've got the money to pay for what we order. We ain't bringing these people here to let 'em get a pauper settle-

ment in this town. We're bringing 'em because it's right to help 'em get onto their feet. You pretend to be a terrible Christian sort of a man. I've tended out on prayer meeting here, and have heard you holler. Do you want me to show you up along this coast as a heathen?"

"I claim to be a Christian man," stated Rowley.

"Then act like one. Furthermore, we'll buy grub for those poor devils from your store and pay you a fair rental for that fish house till we can do better."

Mr. Rowley began to caress his beard, and his face softened.

"They'll eat a lot of vittles," suggested the skipper, "and we've got the money to pay."

"I've got a wallet of my own," put in Thornton, showing it. He had not spoken till then. He had been staring in amazement at this recruit who had so suddenly come over to his banner. After all that sullen growling, he had expected opposition from Candage—in fact, he had narrowly escaped ordering him to stop tagging him about.

"Well, I'm always ready to help friends and do business in a slack time," admitted Mr. Rowley, eying the wallets. "And also show some Christian spirit to them that's poor and oppressed. But what's the sense?"

"I believe, with the right advice and management, those folks of Hue and Cry who are able to work can be made self-supporting," stated Thornton. "I have found myself pulled into the thing all at once, and, now that I'm in, I'm willing to give up a little time and effort to start 'em off. I haven't much of anything else to do just now," he added, a little bitterness in his tones.

"Come into my back office," invited Mr. Rowley.

"I thought you'd see the point when it was put up to you right," observed Captain Candage.

When night fell the men, women, and children whom the benevolent State—through its "straight business" agent—had turned loose upon the world to shift for themselves, were located in the spacious fish house. A few second-hand stoves, hired from Rowley, served for housekeeping purposes, and the families grouped themselves in rooms and behind partitions. This community life under a better roof than had ever sheltered them before delighted them. The oldest among them were like children. They had never looked ahead in all their lives. Given food and shelter, they took no heed of the morrow's problems and needs. They roamed about the new quarters, and felt like princes in a palace. They did not ask Captain Thornton what he proposed to do for them or with them; they surveyed him with a sort of canine thankfulness when he moved among them. He tried one or two of the more intelligent men with questions, hoping that they would show some initiative. They informed him with bland serenity that they would leave all to him.

"But what are you going to do for yourselves?"

"Just what you say—you're the boss."

It was borne in upon him that he had taken a larger contract than he had planned on. Rowley and the taxpayers on the main looked to him on one side, and his dependents on the other.

"It seems to be up to me," he ruefully told the girl, when they were on their way home to the widow's cottage that evening; "I'm pegged in here till I can think up some sort of a scheme."

She had been working faithfully by his side, a tactful and indefatigable lieutenant. He would have been all at sea without her aid with the women and children, and he told her so gratefully.

"I am only trying to show you that I appreciate what you're doing for these poor folks," she said. "My two hands

and my heart are with you in this thing. And I know you'll think of some way out for them—just as you helped us out of that schooner when we had given up hope."

"Getting out of the schooner was merely a sailor's trick, Miss Candage. I don't believe I'm much of a hand at making over human nature. I've got pretty poor material to work on, back in that fish house."

"Oh, you'll think of a plan," she assured him, with fine loyalty. "And if you'll only let me help in my poor way, I'll be so proud."

"I won't tell you what I think of you—I'm not much of a hand for soft talk. But I want to say that you've got a grand old dad," he told her at the door. "When he sheered off on that tack with old Rowley, he nigh took my breath away. You can't tell much what is in a Yankee till he comes out of his shell. Good night. Maybe something will come to me in a dream."

The dream did not come to him, but an idea did as he lay and thought the matter over. The conviction came to him more strongly than ever that he could not back out and leave those people to shift for themselves, much as he needed his time for himself just then. He realized that he had entered upon a quixotic undertaking, but if he lay down on it just then a queer story would chase him along coast.

But deep in his own heart he knew that it was not merely sailor pride that animated him in this. The pathetic helplessness of the tribe of Hue and Cry had struck deep to his heart. He understood them as he understood similar colonies along the coast. They did not know how to work or how to make work pay them.

He arose in the morning nursing the idea that had come to him.

First he took Captain Candage into his confidence and asked his advice, much to the skipper's bland delight at being considered.

"We'll go right to Rowley," declared Captain Candage. "He'll know. If there's anything in this section that he ain't got his finger on some way—a mortgage on, a bill of sale of, then it ain't worth noticing."

Mr. Rowley stroked his beard contentedly, and beamed his pleasure at the prospect of making another profitable dicker with two men who seemed to be reliable and energetic.

"I had a mortgage on the *Ethel and May* when Cap'n Tebbets passed on to the higher life," he informed them. "Widder gave up the schooner, not desiring to—er—bother with vessel proputty, and so I have it free and clear. Shall be pleased to charter to you gents at a reasonable figger. The plan you've got of making those critters work may be a good one, if you'll use a club on 'em often enough."

"Considering how I've heard you talk in prayer meeting, I should think you'd advise moral suasion," suggested Captain Candage, pricked to sarcastic rejoinder.

"I use common sense, whether it's in religion or business," snapped back Rowley. "I wouldn't undertake to trot a dogfish on my knee and sing him to sleep with a pennyr'yal hymn, would I?"

"I believe we'll be able to show results without the club," said Thornton, breaking in on this repartee. And then he whispered to Candage, advising him to settle the charter price before starting a fuss.

"He's a blasted old hypocrite, cheating widders and orphans, and I've always enjoyed fighting such," vouchsafed the skipper, following Rowley to his office. "Him and me is due for a row, but I'll hold off till we've beat him down."

Thornton's plan involved the modest venture of chartering a fishing schooner

and trawling for ground and shack fish a few miles off the coast. It was the only scheme that would afford employment to the whole colony. The older men and the women and children could dig and shuck clams for the trawl bait, and the abler men could fish on shares.

"I may as well fish for the rest of this season as do anything else," declared Captain Candage. "I'll have to let the old *Polly* go to Davy Jones' locker, I reckon."

"I'll go as mate until we get the thing started in good shape and until I hear of a job," volunteered Thornton.

"You won't go as no mate with me," barked Candage. "You'll go as skipper, and I'll be proud to take orders from you."

The two were still wrangling over that point when they came to their boarding place for dinner.

Polly Candage broke the deadlock.

"Why not have two captains?" she suggested. "That will be something brand new along the coast."

"The rest of the scheme is so cussed new—considering what we're carrying for a crew—that my girl's plan better be followed," said the skipper.

And the two captains settled the bargain by shaking hands and grinning at each other.

By the end of that week the *Ethel and May* had delivered her first fare, and had divided her first shares. The colony late of Hue and Cry were toiling like demons, and were as happy as larks. Never before had they eaten such food as Smut-nosed Dolph piled in their pannikins.

Thornton noted another fact with increasing interest. The leaven of the psychology of independence was getting in its work among his men.

The people of Hue and Cry for three generations had been made to feel that they were pariahs. When they had brought their fish or clams to the main, the men who bought were arrogant and contemptuous, as if they were dealing with begging children, and made such prices on the goods as suited their mood. The islanders were never admitted to the plane of straight business like other fishermen. They meekly took what was offered—whether in coin or insults. Their labor had never returned them full value, for they who purchased made the poor wretches feel that they were conferring a favor by buying at any price.

But now, with masterful men to represent them in their dealings, with a good roof over their heads and deck of a tidy schooner under their feet, the men late of Hue and Cry were different beings. Shiftlessness seemed to have departed from them. They were eager to outdo other fishermen. They were over the side in their dories when more cautious trawlsmen hugged the fo'c'sle.

"We'll show 'em," was their slogan.

After long years of oppression, they had at last found their opportunity, and they grasped it with a sort of juvenile enthusiasm that more experienced men never would have developed.

The women and the children and the less capable of the men partook in this rejuvenation. All were allowed fair returns for their toil. There was no more paltering at the back doors of fish houses; they were proudly present when their captains demanded and received the best prices.

Thornton, making up his accounts one day, was honestly astonished to discover that a month had elapsed since he had landed at Maquit.

"That shows how a man will get interested when he is picked up and thrown into a thing," he said to Polly Candage.

"You're making men of them—real men of them," declared the girl enthusiastically. "And you told me you were no kind of a hand at making over human nature," she added, with a laugh.

"Oh, they're doing it themselves."

"If you believe that's the case, I suppose you'll be going away pretty soon," she suggested.

"I must. There's nothing in it for your father and myself, with both of us on the job. There's a fair make for him alone. I didn't intend to stay here so long—I guess I sort of forgot myself."

"I understand."

He found a queer expression on her countenance when he glanced up at her. There were sympathy and friendliness in her eyes—and he who had long revolved bitter thoughts alone, struggling with a problem he could not master, felt that here was the only one in the world in whom he could confide.

"There may be letters waiting for me in the city," he blurted. "I haven't dared to send. I haven't dared to write to her. You are a girl. You understand such things. Will she realize the situation?"

"She ought to."

"I ask your pardon, Miss Polly. But now that there is trouble in your case, do you hear from your young man?"

"I have not heard one word—not a letter—since I came away from my aunt's."

"But you understand that he loves you just the same—you don't need letters."

"Oh, no! I don't need letters."

"And in my case?"

"I could see that she loved you very much. Think how she told it right out before them all! She understands! She does not need letters."

"That puts new courage in me, for I believe you know just how a girl would feel. You know a Yankee! He expects to find a friend where he left him—in the matter of affection. As much as I love Leah Adams, Miss Polly, I can't bring myself to sneak around by the back way. So I hope she understands and will wait for me till I do come—and come right."

"She will wait for you, Captain Thornton. It's the nature of women to wait, when they love. The men work, but the women must wait."

"And that's why I must go away now. I must get out into the world and make good." He set his teeth, and his jaw muscles ridged. "And I *will* make good. I get things I go after."

He swung off the porch of the cottage, and was quickly hid by the fog which stifled sea and shore that day in its folds. The fog had held the *Ethel and May* in port.

Thornton rowed out to the schooner, which was in the harbor roads. He was carrying his accounts to Captain Candage to get his O. K. before dividing shares. He rowed doryman style, standing and facing forward, and thus was able to avoid a steam yacht which had stolen in through the fog and had anchored in his course. She burst suddenly from the mists only a few feet away. He recognized her immediately, and knew that one of his friends was captain of her. He stopped rowing and let the dory drift. One of the crew was putting covers on the brass work forward.

"My compliments to Captain Trott, and tell him Captain Thornton is at the gangway," he called to the man.

The skipper came promptly, and invited the visitor aboard.

"I can't stop, Trott. I can ask my question just as well from here. Do you know of any opening for me?"

The captain of the *Sprite* stared down over the rail, and did not reply promptly.

"I've left the *Olena*. Now that the yachts are getting ready to start for Southern waters, didn't know but you had heard of some changes that will let me in."

The captain began to descend the ladder.

"You needn't bother to come down, Trott."

"I'd rather."

He squatted on the platform at the foot of the ladder, and held the dory close, grasping the gunwale.

"What kind of a devilish run-in did you have with Marston Adams?" he demanded.

Thornton opened his mouth—and as promptly closed it.

It came to him that he could not tell the nature of the trouble between himself and his former employer, for that story involved baring his love for Leah Adams, and the story of her affection for him.

"We had words," he replied stiffly, while the other stared at him.

"Didn't you leave without notice—in a snap of the finger, as you might say?"

"It was an accident."

"I hope you've got a good story to back you up, Thornton, for you're a mighty good friend of mine. But as it stands, you're in almighty bad. Now, what was behind it?"

"I can't tell you."

"What, you can't tell a friend like me?"

"No, Trott."

"Well, you know what has happened in your case, don't you?"

Thornton shook his head.

"Adams says you mutinied and deserted him—threw up your job on the high seas—left him to work back home with a short crew—mate as captain."

"That's an infernal lie."

"Come forward and show him up, then."

"I can't talk about it. I've good reasons."

"Then I'm sorry for you, Thornton. You'll never get a skipper's job on a yacht till you clear yourself, for he has blacklisted you in every yacht club from Eastport to Miami."

Thornton set his oar against the edge of the platform, and pushed off. The skipper called after him, but he was swallowed up by the fog and did not reply.

On board the *Ethel and May* his ragged and cheery crew were hooking clams on the ganging lines, and grinned at him as he swung over the rail. He scowled at them, and turned a glowering gaze on Captain Candage when he met him on the quarter-deck.

"I can see you're getting pretty sick of this two-cent business," acknowledged the old skipper. "I don't blame ye. Ain't any of us in your class, Captain Thornton." He took the papers the latter extended. "I suppose this is the last time we share, you and me. I'll miss ye devilish bad. I'd rather go for nothing and let you have it all than lose you."

"Captain Candage," declared the young man, "just at present I feel that the only friends I've got in this world are here. Don't mind the way I just looked. I've had trouble. I don't want to show myself outside just now till I —I get my grip. We'll hang onto our partnership for a time, if you're satisfied."

"Satisfied! Jumping Cicero!" was all the old skipper could ejaculate. "Shake!"

CHAPTER X.

THE WRECK ON RAZEE REEF.

The November wind nipped, the wharf piles were sheathed with ice, and only hardy men were abroad on the water front of the little coast city, but the crew of the *Ethel and May* were unusually cheerful that day.

The schooner had stayed on Cashes Banks and had ridden out a gale that had driven other fishermen to shelter. Then in the first lull she had sent her dories over the rail and had put down her trawls for a set—and a rousing set it was! It seemed as if the cod, hake, and haddock had been waiting for that gale to stop so that they might hunt

for baited hooks and have a feast. Nearly every ganging line had its prize. The bow pulley in each dory fairly chuckled with delight as the trawl line was pulled over it. Every three feet was a ganging line. Each dory strung out a mile of trawl. And when the dories returned to the schooner and dumped the catch into the hold, the little schooner fairly wallowed with her load.

They caught the market bare; the gale had blown for nearly a week. Fish houses bid wildly against each other, and when at last a trade was made and the schooner's crew began to pitchfork the fish into the winch buckets and the buckets went creaking out over the rail, the two captains went into the office of the fish house to figure some mighty gratifying profits.

"Nothing like luck in the fishing game, gents," observed the manager.

"Well, grit counts for something," stated Captain Candage. "We've got a crew that ain't afraid of a little weather."

"If that's the case, there may be something for you off coast about now that's better than the fishing game."

"What's that?" asked the old skipper.

"Wrecking. Seen the morning papers?"

"We've had something to do besides fool with papers."

"That new Bee Line steamer, *Conomo,* has been piled up on Razee Reef."

"One time—this last time—she hugged too close!" snapped the young man. The others bent inquiring gaze on him. But he did not explain. His thoughts were busy with the events of that day, when the Bee Line steamer brought his troubles with Marston Adams to a crisis.

"Paper says she's considered a total loss," went on the manager. "If that's so, and the underwriters give her up, there ought to be some fine picking for men with grit. The board of survey went out to her on a tug this morning."

He gave them their check, and they went aboard their schooner.

The affair of the *Conomo* was not mentioned between them until they were at sea on their way to the eastward again. The piece of news did not interest Thornton at first, except as a marine disaster that had no bearing on his own affairs.

Captain Candage was stumping the quarter-deck, puffing at his short, black pipe.

"I donno as you feel anyways as I do about it, Captain Thornton, but it ain't going to be no great outset to us if we make a leg out to Razee and see what's going on there," he suggested.

"I have no objections," returned Thornton. "But the way things are managed nowadays in case of wrecks I don't see much prospect of our getting in on the thing in any way."

"Mebbe not; but in case they're going to abandon her there'll be some grabbing and we might as well grab with the rest of 'em."

"If they can't get her off, some junk concern will gamble on her. But we'll make an excursion of it to see the sights, sir. We can afford a little trip after what we pulled down to-day."

There was no hope of reaching the wreck before nightfall, so they jogged comfortably in the light westerly that had succeeded the gale.

Captain Candage took the first watch after the second dogwatch, and at two bells, or nine o'clock in the evening, Thornton awoke and heard him give orders to "pinch her." He heard the sails flap, and knew that the men were shortening in readiness to lay to. He slipped on his outer clothing, and went on deck.

"We're here," stated the old skipper, "and it looks like some other moskeeters had got here ahead of us, ready to

stick in their little bills when they get a chance."

It was a clear night, brilliant with stars. In contrast with the twinkling and pure light of the heavens, there were dim reds and greens and yellowish-white lights on the surface of the ocean. These lights rocked and oscillated and tossed as the giant surges swept past.

"I make out half a dozen sail—little fellers—and two tugs," said Captain Candage. "But get your eye on the main squeeze!"

Thornton looked in the direction of the extended mittened hand.

"Some isuckle, hey?" commented the skipper.

A short half mile away, a veritable ghost ship, loomed the wrecked *Conomo*. Spray had beaten over her, and had congealed until she seemed like a mass of ice that had been molded into the shape of a ship. She gleamed, a spectral figure, under the starry heavens.

A single red light, a baleful blob of color, showed from her main rigging.

They surveyed her for some time.

"I should say she was spoke for," was Captain Candage's opinion. "It's high tide now, and a spring tide at that, and them tugs is just loafing out there—ain't making a move to start her. We can tell more about the prospect in the morning."

Then the two captains turned in, for the *Ethel and May* lay to docilely, with a single helmsman at the wheel.

The crisp light of morning did not reveal anything especially new or important. There were half a dozen small schooners, fishermen, loafing under shortened canvas in the vicinity of the wreck. One of the tugs departed shoreward after a time.

Thornton had assured himself, through the schooner's telescope, that the remaining tug was named *Seba J. Ransom*.

"The captain of that fellow went mate with me on a fishing steamer once," he informed Captain Candage. "Jockey me down in reaching distance and I'll go aboard him in a dory. He may have some news."

Captain Dodge was immensely pleased to see his old chum, and called him up into the pilot house and gave him a cigar.

"It's only a loafing job," he said. "I've got to stand by and take off her captain and crew in case of rough weather or anything breaks loose more'n what's already busted. They are still hanging by her so as to deliver her to the buyer."

"Buyer?"

"Yep! To whatever junkman is fool enough to bid her in. She's stuck fast. Underwriters have gone back on that tug, and are going to auction her. I'm here to help keep off pirates and take her men ashore after she has been handed over. You a pirate, Thornton?" he asked, with a grin.

"I'm most anything nowadays, if there's a dollar to be made," returned the young man.

The *Ransom's* captain gave him a wink.

"I'm on to what happened on board the *Olena*," he confided. "Feller who was in the crew told me. You're good enough for old Adams' girl. Why haven't you gone up to New York, and taken——"

"Cut that conversation, Dodge," barked Thornton, his face hard and his jaw jutting threateningly.

"But I can tell you all about how she threw down that Blake after you left, and sassed her old man—and is waiting for you."

"Good day!" said the young man, slamming the pilot-house door behind him.

His schooner, standing off and on, picked him up.

"There's no use hanging around

here," he informed the old skipper. "They're going to junk her, if they can find anybody fool enough to bid. She'll be guarded till after the auction."

Therefore the *Ethel and May* shook out all her canvas and headed full and by for Maquit to secure her fresh supply of bait.

"It's a shame," mourned Captain Candage, staring over the taffrail at the ice-sheathed steamer. "Most new, and cost a hundred and fifty thousand dollars to build, if I remember right what the paper said when she was launched. I supose old Mart Adams is taking an extra drink and throwing up his hat about now."

"If she was making money they'll have another one on in her place," said Thornton.

"Donno about that, sir. The Bee Line wasn't none too strong financially—a lot of little fellers who put in what they could scrape and borrowed the rest. Depends on insurance and their courage, what they do after this."

He offered another observation after he had tamped down a load in his black pipe.

"Men will do most anything for money—enough money."

"Seems as if I'd heard that statement before," was Thornton's curt rejoinder.

"Oh, I know it ain't in anyways new. But the more I think over what has happened to the *Conomo,* the pickeder seems the point to that remark. And whilst I was standing off and on, waiting for you, I run close enough to that steamer to make out a few faces aboard her."

Thornton glanced at him without comment.

"F'r instance, I saw Art Simpson. You know him, don't you?"

"He was captain of Mr. Adams' yacht once."

"Why did he leave her?"

"I heard he had been discharged. That was what Mr. Adams said when he hired me."

"Yes, that's what Simpson said. He made a business of going around and swearing about it. Seemed to want to have everybody 'long coast hear him swear about it. When I see a man make too much of a business of swearing about another man, I get suspicious. After Art Simpson worked his cards so as to get the job of second officer on board the new *Conomo,* I got *more* suspicious. Now that I have seen how that steamer has been plunked fair and square on Razee, I'm *almighty* suspicious. I'm suspicious enough to believe that she banged during Art Simpson's watch."

"What are you driving at, Captain Candage? Are you hinting that Marston Adams would plant a man for a job of that kind?"

"Exactly what I'm hinting," drawled the skipper. "I'm making it stronger than a hint. I'll bet he done it—it all points that way."

"That's ridiculous."

"I've known Mart Adams along this coast for a good many years. I've had a look into his bag of tricks before now. That's just his style—that thing back there!"

"Don't you suppose a man like Adams knows better than to think he can stop an idea like this new transportation scheme by any such pancake deviltry? They'll keep on building steamers."

"It takes time to build steamers. It takes money to build them. You've got to find folks with the money to invest. Money is scary. Let a quick loss happen in a new thing that ain't well established and proved out, and money flaps its wings, and squawks, and flies to a higher roost when ye try to get hold of it again. Mart Adams is living *now,* and living for himself, and he has got a lot of money tied up in towboats and barges. The longer he can stave

off a line that can kill him, that means he'll be all right while he's alive. And after he's dead, he don't care how they reorganize coast transportation. If I was dead now, I wouldn't be cussing because his barges had killed the sailing-packet business. He has set the Bee Line back good and plenty—and I say again, a forty-dollar-a-month second officer will do a whole lot for a fat roll of ready money. In the meantime, Mart Adams' barges will be carrying all the freight. And to blazes with what may happen next year! That's his motto."

That was a tough proposition for Thornton to swallow, in spite of his very lively hatred of Marston Adams. Notwithstanding all his tender love for the daughter, Thornton was obliged to own to himself that he was not angelic enough to forgive the father for the daughter's sake. He could have viewed his discharge from employment with sailor philosophy; but to be wantonly blacklisted at a time when he was so vitally interested in making good was an offense unforgivable.

"Of course, I didn't hear the talk, nor see the money pass, nor I wa'n't in the pilot house when Art Simpson shut his eyes and let her slam," pursued Captain Candage. "But having been a sailorman all my life, I smell nasty weather a long ways off. That steamer was wrecked a-purpose, and she was wrecked at a time o' year when she can't be salvaged. You don't have to advise the devil how to build a bonfire."

"Are you going to say anything about it—start anything?" inquired the young man.

"Not by a blame sight. When ye heave a rotten punkin in the air, there ain't no telling which way the gurry will splash. It ain't any of my business. I shall stay out of it."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Skipper Candage. You may have made a good guess in this thing, but a good guess has snapped back and blacked many a man's eye. We'd better forget the *Conomo*."

Two days later a newspaper came into Thornton's hands at Maquit, and he read, with only passing interest, that the wrecked steamer had been put up at auction by the underwriters. It was plain that the bidders had shared the insurance folks' general feeling of pessimism—she had been knocked down for two thousand five hundred dollars. The newspaper explained that only this ridiculous sum had been realized because experts had decided that in the first blow the steamer would slip off the ledges on which she was impaled and would go down like a plummet in the deep water from which old Razee cropped. Even the most reckless of gambling junkmen could not be expected to dare much of an investment in such a peek-a-boo game as that.

"But I wonder what was the matter with the expert who predicted that," mused Thornton. "He doesn't know the old jaw teeth of Razee Reef as well as I do."

CHAPTER XI.

FOOLS RUSH IN.

When the *Ethel and May* set forth from Maquit on her next trip to Cashes Banks, Thornton suggested—and he was a bit shamefaced when he did so—that they might as well go out of their way a little and see what the junkers were doing at Razee.

Captain Candage eyed his associate with rather quizzical expression.

"Great minds travel et cetry!" he chuckled. "I was just going to say that same thing to you. On your mind a little, is it?"

"Yes, and only a little. Of course, there can't be anything in it for us. Those junkers will stick to her till she ducks for deep water. But I've been

wondering why they think she's going to duck. I seined around Razee for two years, and the old chap has teeth like a hyena—regular fangs."

"Maybe they took Art Simpson's say-so," remarked the old man, wrinkling his nose. "Art would be very encouraging about the prospects of saving her—that is to say, he would be so in case losing that steamer has turned his brain."

"Guess there wasn't very much interest by the underwriters," suggested Thornton. "They weren't stuck very hard. She was mostly owned in sixty-fourths, and with marine risks up to where they are, small owners don't insure. It's a wicked thing all through, Candage! That great, new steamer piled up there by somebody's devilishness! I've been to sea so long that a boat means something to me beside iron and wood. There's something about 'em—something——"

"Almost human," put in the old man. "I sorrowed over the *Polly,* but I didn't feel as bad as if she'd been new. It was sort of like when old folks die of natural causes—you know they have lived about as long as they can. It's sorrowful to have 'em go—but you have to feel reconciled. But I know just how it is with you in the case of that steamer—for I'm a sailor like you. It's just like getting a fine boy through college—seeing him start out full of life, and courage, and hopes, and prospects, and then seeing him drop dead at your feet."

There was a quaver in the old man's tones. But Thornton, who knew the souls of mariners, understood. Under their hard shells there is imagination that has been nurtured in long, long thoughts. In the calms under starlit skies, in the black darkness when tossing surges swing beneath the keel, in the glimmering vistas of sunlighted seas, sailors ponder while their more stolid brothers on land allow their souls to doze.

"You are right, Captain Candage. That's why I almost hate to go out to the *Conomo.* Those infernal ghouls of junkmen will be tearing her into bits instead of trying to put the breath of life back into her. I believe I suggested, a few days ago, that we'd better forget her. I swear I can't seem to do it."

The helpless steamer seemed more lonely than when they had visited her before. The mosquito fleet that had surrounded her, hoping for some stray pickings, had dispersed. A tug and a couple of lighters were stuck against her icy sides, and, like leeches, were sucking from her what they could. They were prosecuting their work industriously, for the sea was calm in one of those lulls between storms, a wintry truce that Atlantic coastwise toilers understand and depend on.

Thornton, his curiosity prompting him, determined to go on board one of the lighters and discover to what extremes the junk jackals were proceeding.

Two of his dorymen ferried him after the schooner had been hove to near the wreck.

"What's your business?" inquired a man who was bundled in a fur coat and seemed to be bossing operations.

"Nothing much," confessed the young man from his dory, which was tossing alongside the lighter. "I'm only a fisherman."

The swinging cranes of the lighters, winches purring, the little lifting engines puffing in breathless staccato, were hoisting and dropping cargo—potatoes in sacks, and huge rolls of print paper. Thornton was a bit astonished to note that they were not stripping the steamer; not even her anchors and chains had been disturbed.

"Fend off!" commanded the boss.

Captain Dodge dropped one of the windows of his pilot house, and leaned on his elbows, thrusting his head out. The tug *Seba J. Ransom* was still on the job. She was tied up alongside the wreck, chafing her fenders against the ice-sheathed hull.

"Hello, Thornton!" he called, a welcoming grin splitting has features. "Come aboard and have a cigar—and this time I'll keep the conversation on fish scales and gurry butts."

The man in the fur coat glanced from one to the other, and was promptly placated.

"Oh, this is a friend of yours, is he, Captain Dodge?"

"You bet he is. He's been my boss before now."

"If that's the case, make yourself at home anywhere. But you know what some of these fellows along coast who call themselves fishermen will do around a wreck when your back is turned!"

Thornton nodded amicably.

"Step on board," invited the boss.

"I'm all right here in the dory—and I'm out from underfoot, sir. We're going along to the fishing grounds in a jiffy. I'm only satisfying a sailor's curiosity. Wondered what you intended to do with this proposition."

"We're only grabbing what's handy just now. Some of the cargo forward is above water. I'm in on this thing in a sort of queer way, myself." This keen-eyed young man who had been so heartily indorsed by the tugboat skipper afforded the man in the fur coat an opportunity for a little conversation about himself. "I'm the outside man for Todd & Simonton, of Boston, and bought on the jump after I'd swapped a wire or so with the house. Happened into that auction, and bought blind. I believe in a gamble, myself. Then somebody wired to the concern that they had been stuck good and fine, and they gave me a sizzler of a calldown in a night message. A man can sit at desk in Boston and think up a whole lot of things that ain't so. Well, I've flown out here with what equipment I could scrape up in a hurry, and you can see what I'm doing! There's enough in sight in the way of loose cargo to square me wtth the concern. But, blast the luck! If Jake Simonton had a little grit and would back me, I believe we'd make a killing."

"Of course, it all depends on how she's resting, and what will happen when the next blow comes," said Thornton. "Have you been below?"

"I'm a hustler on a dicker, and a hellion on junk," snapped the boss. "I'm no sailor, prophet, or marine architect. I simply know that she's full of water aft, and has got something serious the matter with her innards. I'm pulling enough out to make Simonton sorry he sassed me in a night message. Only he will never let on that he's sorry. He never lets loose any boomerangs that will scale around and come back and hit him. He wants to be in a position to rasp me the next time I make a mistake in a gamble."

"All the crew gone ashore—the Bee Line men?"

"Sure—bag and baggage. We own her as she stands. That second officer had 'em shivering every time a wave slapped her. I was glad when he got away. He pretty nigh stampeded *my* men. Said she was liable to take a slide any minute."

The drawling voice of Captain Dodge broke in above them.

"Here comes the tug *Resolute,*" he stated. "Mebbe it's another one of them night messages from your concern, Titus. May want you to put what you can carry of her in a paper bag and bring it to Boston."

"You never can tell what they're going to do in Boston," growled the outside man. "I get discouraged, sometimes, trying to be enterprising."

He began to pace, looking worried,

and did not reply to several questions that Thornton put to him. So the young man accepted Captain Dodge's invitation, and climbed to the tugboat's pilot house. He had a very human hankering to know what the coming of that tug from the main signified, and decided to hang around a little while longer, even at the risk of making Captain Candage impatient.

The *Resolute* brought a telegram, and the man in the fur coat slapped it open, took in its gist at one glance, and began to swear with great gusto.

He climbed into the *Ransom's* pilot house, with the air of a man seeking comfort from friends, and fanned the sheet of paper wrathfully.

"Orders to resell. Get out from under. Take what I can get. Don't want the gamble. And here I have cleaned a good profit already."

"Why don't you fire back a message advising 'em to hold on?" asked Captain Dodge.

"And have a gale come up in a few hours and knock her off'n this rock? That's what would happen. It would be just my luck. I'm only a hired man, gents. If my firm won't gamble, it ain't up to me. If I disobey orders and hold on, I'll be scared to death the first time the wind begins to blow. There's no use in ruining a fine set of nerves for a firm that won't appreciate the sacrifice —and I need nerve to keep on working for 'em. I say it ain't up to me. Me for shore as soon as I load those lighters. Every dollar I get by reselling is velvet, so let 'er go!"

"What do they tell you to do about price?" ventured Thornton.

"Take the first offer—and hurry about it. They seem to have an idea that this steamer is standing on her head on the point of a needle, and that only a blind man will buy her."

He went back to his crew, much disgusted, ordered the freshly arrived tug to wait for a tow, and spurred laggard toilers with sharp profanity.

"Somebody has been scaring his concern," suggested Thornton, left alone with Captain Dodge.

"Perhaps so—but it may be good business to get scared, provided they can unload this onto somebody else for a little ready cash. This spell of weather can't last much longer. Look at that bank to s'uthard. I don't know just what is under her in the way of ledges—never knew much about old Razee. But my prediction is, she'll break in two as soon as the waves give her any motion."

It was on the tip of Thornton's tongue to argue the matter with the tugboat man, but he took second thought and shut his mouth.

"You're probably right," he admitted. "I'd better be moving. I don't see any fish jumping aboard our schooner. We've got to go and catch 'em. Good-by, Dodge."

When he went over the rail of the *Ethel and May,* Captain Candage, from force of habit, having picked up his men, gave orders to let her off into the wind.

"Hold her all-aback!" commanded Thornton. "Excuse me, Captain Candage, for a cross order, but I've got a bit of news I want you to hear before we leave. The junk crowd has got cold feet, and are going to sell as she stands, as soon as they get cargoes for those lighters."

"Well, she does lay in a bad way—and weather is making," said the skipper, fiddling his forefinger under his nose dubiously.

"They haven't even skimmed the cream off her—probably will get all her cargo that's worth saving and some loose stuff in the rigging line. By gad, what a chance for a gamble!"

"It might be for a feller who had so much money he could kiss a slice of it good-by in case the Atlantic Ocean

showed aces," said the old man, revealing a sailor's familiarity with a popular game.

"There is such a thing as being desperate enough to stake your whole bundle," declared Thornton. "Captain, I'm young, and I suppose I have got a young man's folly. I can't expect you to feel the way I feel about a gamble."

"I may look old, but I haven't gone to seed yet," grumbled the skipper. "What are you trying to get through you?"

"That fat man on that lighter has a telegram in his pocket from his folks in Boston ordering him to take the first offer that is made for the *Conomo* as she stands. I'm fool enough to be willing to put in every dollar I've got—and take a chance."

Captain Candage stared at his associate for a time, and then walked to the rail and took a long look at the steamer.

"I never heard of a feller ever getting specially rich in the fishing game," he remarked.

Thornton, wild thoughts urging him to desperate ventures for the sake of a girl who was waiting for him to make good, snapped in corroboration of that dictum.

"And I've known a lot of fellers to go broke in the wrecking game," pursued Captain Candage. "How much have you got?" That question came so unexpectedly that Thornton gasped.

"I've got rising six hundred dollars." He was carrying his little hoard in his pocket, for a man operating from the hamlet of Maquit must needs be his own banker.

"I've got rising six hundred in my own pocket," said the skipper. "That fat man may have orders to take the first offer that's made, but we've got to make him one that's big enough so that he won't kick us overboard and then go hunt up a buyer on the main."

The two fishermen who had ferried the young man were nesting their dory on top of other dories, and just forward of the house, and were within hearing. Neither captain noted with what interest these men were listening, exchanging glances with the man at the wheel.

"And after we waggle our wad under his nose—and less than a thousand will be an insult, so I figger—what have we got left to operate with? It won't do us any good to sail round that steamer for the rest of the winter and admire her. What was you thinking, Thornton, of trying to work him for a snap bargain, now that he's here on the spot and anxious to sell—and then grabbing off a little quick profit by peddling her to somebody else?"

"No, sir!" cried the young man, with decision. "I've got my own good reasons for wanting to make this job the whole hog or not a bristle! I won't go into it on any other plan."

"Well, we'll be into something, all right, after we invest our money—the whole lump. We'll most likely be in a scrape—not a dollar left to hire men or buy wrecking outfit."

The two men finished lashing the dories and went forward.

"It's a wild scheme, and I'm a fool to be thinking about it, Captain Candage. But wild schemes appeal to me just now. I can make some more money by working hard and saving it, a few dollars at a time, but I never expect to see another chance like this. Oh, yes, I see that bank in the south!" His eyes followed the skipper's gloomy stare. "By to-morrow at this time she may be forty fathoms under. But here's the way I feel." He pulled out his wallet and slapped it down on the roof of the house. "All on the turn of one card! And there comes the blow that will turn it!" He pointed south into the slaty clouds.

Captain Candage paused in his patrol of the quarter-deck, and gazed down on the wallet. Then he began to tug at his own.

"I'm no dead one, even if my hair is gray," he grumbled.

The two captains looked at the two wallets, and then at each other. The next moment their attention was fully taken up by another matter. Their crew of fifteen men came marching aft and lined up forward of the house. A spokesman stepped out.

"Excuse us, captings, for meddling into something that p'raps ain't none of our business. We ain't meaning to peek nor pry—but some of us couldn't help overhearing. We've cleaned out our pockets. Here it is—three hundred and sixty-eight dollars and thirty-seven cents. Will you let me step onto the quarter-deck and lay it down side of them wallets?'

He accepted their amazed silence as consent, and made his deposit solemnly.

"But this is all a gamble—and a mighty uncertain one," protested Thornton.

"We ain't never had no chance to be sports before in all our lives," pleaded the man. "We wouldn't have had that money if you two heroes hadn't give us the chance you have. We wa'n't more'n half men before. Now we can hold up our heads. You'll make us feel mighty mean—as if we wasn't fit to be along with you, if you won't let us in."

"You bet you can come in, boys," shouted Captain Candage. "I know how you feel."

"And another thing," went on the spokesman. "We ain't had much time to talk this over—we rushed aft here as soon as we heard, and had cleaned out our pockets. But we've said enough to each other so that we can tell you that all of us will turn to on that wreck with you and work for nothing till—till—well, whatever happens. And if she sinks, we'll sing a song and go back to fishing again."

The man at the wheel let go the spokes and came forward and deposited a handful of money beside the rest.

"There's mine—I wisht it was a million—it would go just as free."

"Boys, I'd make a speech to you—but my throat is too full," choked Thornton. "I know better, now, why something called me over to Hue and Cry last summer. Hard over with that wheel! Jockey her down toward the wreck."

When they were within hailing distance of the lighter, Thornton raised his megaphone.

"Will you take fifteen hundred dollars—cash—now—for that wreck, as you leave her when you've loaded those lighters?" he shouted.

There was a long period of silence. Then the man in the fur coat replied, through his hollowed hands:

"Yes—and blast the fools in Boston who are making me sell!"

CHAPTER XII.

RAZEE'S IRON JAW.

After the man in the fur coat had placed a hastily executed bill of sale in Thornton's hands, he frankly declared that his interest in the fortune of the wrecked steamer had ceased.

"The *Resolute* reports that storm signals are displayed. I'll simply make sure of what I've got. I'll play the game as those quitters in Boston seem to want me to play it."

The tugs, departing with their tows, squalled salutes to the little schooner hove to under the counter of the *Conomo*.

"Sounds like they was making fun of us," growled Candage. He scowled into the gray skies, and across the lonely sea.

Thornton, too, sensed a derisive note in the whistle toots. Depression had promptly followed the excitement that had spurred him into this venture. The crackle of the legal paper in his reefer pocket only accentuated his gloom. That paper seemed to represent so lit-

tle now. It was not merely his own gamble—he had drawn into a desperate undertaking men who could not afford to lose. They had put all their little prosperity in jeopardy. There were women and children ashore to consider. He and his fellows now owned that great steamer which loomed there under the brooding heavens. But it was a precarious possession. The loss of her now would mean not merely the loss of all their little hoards—it would mean the loss of hope, and the sacrifice of expectations, and the regret of men who have failed in a big task. He realized how stinging would be defeat, for he was building the prospects of his future upon winning in this thing.

Would it mean the more bitter enmity of Marston Adams if he salvaged this menace to Adams' prosperity? Thornton knew it would. But the conviction thrilled him that if he won he could face Adams as an equal in the fields of endeavor. His association with the magnate of transportation had given him a line on that gentleman's character, so he believed. A real man has a sure instinct that enables him to scent the moral cowardice of a bully.

"You've got to punch some men to make them respect you," pondered Thornton. "I'd rather be hated good and plenty than be sneered at as a lackey and a chauffeur."

But he confessed to himself that his love for Leah Adams was more surely a goad in this adventure than his quarrel with Adams over his own affairs. And yet, even the knowledge of their mutual love and the hope that sprang from it did not reassure him as he gazed first at the departing lighters and then at the ice-panoplied hulk on Razee.

Surely no pauper ever had a more unwieldy elephant on his hands, without a wisp of hay in sight for food. He had seen wrecking operations: money, men, and gigantic equipment often failed to win. Technical and expert knowledge were required. He did not know what an examination of her hull would reveal. He had bought as boys would swap jackknives—sight denied! He confessed to himself that even the pittance they had gambled on this hazard had been spent with the recklessness of folly, considering that they had spent their all. They had nothing left to operate with. It was like a man tying his hands behind him before he jumped overboard.

Oh, that was a lonely sea! It was gray, and surly, and ominous.

Black smoke from the distant tugs waved dismal farewell. A chill wind had begun to harp through the cordage of the little schooner; the moan—far flung, mystic, a voice from nowhere—that presages the tempest crooned in his ears.

"I can smell something in this weather that's worse than scorched-on hasty pudding," stated Captain Candage. "I don't know just how you feel, Thornton, but if a feller should ride up here in a hearse about now and want my option on her for what I paid, I believe I'd dicker with him before we come to blows."

"I can't blame you," confessed the young man. "This seems to be another case of 'Now that we've got it, what the devil shall we do with it?' "

"Let's pile ashore on the trail of them lighters and dicker it—and be sensible," advised his associate. "I feel as if I owned a share in old Poppocatterpettul—or whatever that mountain is—and had been ordered to move it in a shawl strap."

Thornton surveyed their newly acquired property through the advancing dusk.

"I believe I know a feller we can unload onto," persisted Candage. "He has done some wrecking, and is a reckless cuss.

"Look here," snapped Thornton, "we'll settle one point right now, sir.

I'm not hurrahing over this prospect—not at all. But I'm in it, and I'm going to stick on my original plan. I don't want anybody in with me who is going to keep looking back and whining. If everything goes by the board, you won't hear a whicker out of me. If you want to quit now, Captain Candage, go ahead, and I'll mortgage my future to pay back what you have risked. Now what do you say?'

"Why, I say you're talking just the way I like to hear a man talk," declared the skipper stoutly. "I'll be cursed if I like to go into a thing with any half-hearted feller. You're *my* kind—and after this you'll find me *your* kind." He turned and shouted commands: "Get in mains'l, close reef fores'l, and let her ride with that and jumbo."

"That's the idea!" commended Thornton. "The Atlantic Ocean is getting ready to deal a hand in this game. We have got to stick close if we're going to see what cards we draw."

A fishing schooner, if well handled, is a veritable stormy petrel in riding out a blow. Even the ominous signs of tempest did not daunt the two captains. They were there to guard their property and to have their hopes or their fears realized.

"If the *Conomo* has got her grit with her and lives through it," said Captain Candage, "we'll be here to give her three cheers when it's over. And if she goes down we'll be on deck to flap her a fare-ye-well."

In that spirit they snugged everything on board the schooner and prepared to defy the storm.

It came in the night, with a howl of blast and sleet like bird shot. It stamped upon the throbbing sea and made tumult in water and air. At midnight they were wallowing with only a forestays'l that was iced to the hardness of boiler plate. But though the vast surges flung their mighty arms in efforts to grasp the schooner, she dodged and danced on her nimble way and frustrated their malignity. Her men did not sleep; they thawed themselves in relays and swarmed on deck again. Each seemed to be animated by personal and vital interest.

"You can't buy crews like this one with wages," observed Captain Candage, icicled beard close to Thornton's ear. "I reckon it was about as my Polly said—you cast bread on the waters when you took their part on Hue and Cry."

The young man, clinging to a cleat and watching the struggles of their craft, waved a mittened hand to signify that he agreed. In that riot of tempest and ruck of sea he was straining his eyes, trying to get a glimpse of the hulk on Razee. But the schooner had worked her way too far off to the west, pressed to leeward by the palm of the storm.

Then at last came morning, an opaque dawn that was shrouded with swirling snow, and all was hidden from their eyes except the tumbling mountains of water which swept to them, threatened to engulf them, and then melted under their keel. The captains could only guess at the extent of their drift, but when the wind quieted after midday, and they were able to get sail on the schooner, they were in no doubt as to the direction in which the steamer must lie. They began their sloshing ratch back to east.

Thornton braved nipping wind and iced rigging, and took the glass to the main crosstrees. He remained there though he was chilled through and through.

At last, near the horizon's rim, he spied a yeasty tumult of the sea, marking some obstruction at which the waves were tussling. In the midst of this white welter there was a shape that was almost spectral under the gray skies. The little schooner pitched so ferocious-

ly that only occasionally could he bring this object into the range of the glass. But he made sure at last. He clutched the glass and tobogganed to deck down the slippery shrouds.

"She's there, Captain Candage!" he shouted. "The fangs of old Razee are still biting."

They were back to her again before the early night descended. She was iced to the main truck, and the spray had deposited hillocks of ice on her deck, weighting her down upon the ledges which had pinioned her. But in spite of the battering she had received, her position had not changed. They circled her—the midget of a schooner seeming pitifully inadequate to cope with this monster craft.

"Well," sighed Captain Candage, "thank the Lord she's still here. Our work is cut out for us now—whatever it is we can do with her. They say a mouse set a lion loose once by gnawing his ropes. It looks to me as if we're going to have some blasted slow gnawing here."

They lay by her that night in a quieting sea, and spent wakeful hours in the cabin, struggling rather helplessly with schemes.

"Of course, it's comforting to find her here and to know that the Atlantic Ocean will have to get more muscle to move her," said Candage. "And then again, it ain't so darnation comforting. Looks to me as if she's stuck there so solid that you couldn't joggle her off if you hove the moon at her. I reckon my hope has been what yours has been, Thornton: salvage her whole instead of junking her."

"I'm a sailor, not a junkman. I'd almost rather let my money go, Captain Candage, than be a party to smashing up that new steamer into old iron. She has fooled the guessers by sticking where she is. It has been my hope from the first that she can be floated. She is not a rusted old iron rattletrap. Of course, she's got a hole in her, and we can see now that she's planted mighty solid. But she is sound and tight, I'll wager, in all her parts except where that wound is. I suppose most men who came along here now would guess that she can't be got off whole. I'm going into this thing and try to fool *those* guessers, too."

"That's the only real gamble," agreed the skipper. "We'd only make day's wages by carving her into a junk pile. A scrap heap ain't worth much except as old iron at half a cent a pound; but a new steamer like that is worth a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, by gorry, if she's afloat."

"Well, we've got to do something besides lay to here and look at her lines. In the first place, I want to know what's the matter with her—about how much of a hole she has got. Our eyes ought to tell us a little something."

And on that errand Thornton departed the next morning, after breakfast.

Only a sailor, young, alert, and bold, could have scaled the side of the steamer in that weather. Her ladder was in place, but nothing much except an exaggerated icicle. But it was on the lee side of her, and his dory was fairly well protected from the rush of the seas. With his hatchet he hacked foothold on the ladder, left his men in the dory, and notched his perilous way to the deck. The fore hatch was open, just as the hastily departing salvagers had left it. He went below, down the frosted iron ladder. He was fronted with a cheerless aspect. Cargo and water hid what damage she had suffered. The fat man had secured most of the cargo that the water had not ruined.

He climbed back on deck and explored midships and aft. Her engine room was partially flooded, for her forepeak was propped on the higher part of the reef, and water had settled

aft. Her crew's quarters were above water, for they were on and above the main deck, as is the case with most cargo carriers of the newer type. He found plenty of tinned food in the steward's domain, coal in the galley bunker, and there was bedding in the officers' staterooms.

Thornton scrambled back to his dory, and went aboard the schooner. He reported his findings.

"And here's the only sensible plan for the present, Captain Candage: I'll take two men and a dory and go aboard and guard our property. Somebody must stay here—and I don't want you to take the chances on that wreck. You've got a daughter. You probably know more of the shipyard crowd in Limeport than I do. That's the nearest city, and I believe that when you report that the *Conomo* is holding after this storm you can hire some equipment on credit and borrow some money."

"I swear I'll do my best. I know a lot of water-front folks, and I've always paid my bills."

"We need stuff for the whole wrecking game—engine, pumps, and all the rest. You go and scout on shore and capture a few men and bring 'em out here to look our prospect over."

"Offer 'em a lay?"

"No, sir. We'll make this a close corporation. I don't propose to let a lot of land sharks in here to manipulate us out of what's our own. It's our gamble, and we want what's coming out of it. Go ashore and see what you can do on prices and terms. Don't close anything till you and I have conferred. I'll have a schedule of needs made up by the time you're back."

Half an hour later he was located on the wreck with the two men he had selected as his companions. They carried tackle with them, with which they hoisted after them their dory—their main bower in case of emergency.

And the sea which Thornton surveyed was more lonely than ever, for the *Ethel and May* was standing off across the heaving surface toward the main, and the hulk was left alone in the expanse of ocean. He felt very much of a pygmy and very helpless as he scrambled about over the icy decks. He remembered that faith can move mountains, according to scriptural adjurations, but he was as yet unable to determine just what power would be able to move that steamer, into whose vitals the reef of Razee had poked its teeth.

CHAPTER XIII.

A BAG OF CANNED THUNDER.

At eight bells, midnight, Thornton turned out of his berth, for he heard something that interested him. It was a soft pattering, a gentle swishing. As a mariner, he knew how sudden can be meteorological changes on the coast in winter. When the north winds have raged and howled and have blown themselves out, spitting sleet and snow, the gentler south winds have their innings, and bear balmier moisture from the Gulf Stream. He poked his head out, and felt soft air and warm rain. He had been hoping and half expecting that a change of weather would bring this condition—known as a January thaw. He went back to his bunk, much comforted.

A bright sun awoke him. Clear skies had succeeded the rain. All was dripping and melting. Chunks of ice were dropping from the steamer's stubby masts, and her scuppers were beginning to discharge water from the softening mass on her deck.

He and his little crew ate breakfast with great good cheer, then secured axes from the steamer's tool house, and began to chop watercourses in the ice. A benignant sun in a cloudless sky had enlisted himself as a member of the wrecking crew on Razee Reef. That

weather would soon clear the *Conomo* of her sheathing.

This was a cheerful prospect, because rigging and deck equipment of various kinds would be released. The steamer began to look like a less discouraging proposition. She was no longer the icicle that had put a chill into underwriters and bidders. Thornton lost that somberness that had weighed upon him. The sea did not seem so lonely and so threatening.

He felt that he could show something tangible and hopeful to the parties whom Captain Candage might be able to solicit.

When he saw a tug approaching in the afternoon, his optimism suggested that it brought the skipper and his party; his own hopes were so high now that he felt that men with equipment and money would be eager to loan it to parties who possessed such excellent prospects. In such fashion he translated this apparent haste to get to the reef.

But it was not Captain Candage who hailed him when the tug eased herself against the ladder, her screw churning the sea in reverse. The late second officer of the *Conomo,* Mr. Art Simpson, came out of the pilot house of the *Resolute,* carrying a big leather suit case. He was plainly the passenger who had chartered her. A deck hand tossed a cast line to the steamer's deck, and Thornton promptly threw it back.

"You can't come aboard, Simpson."

"Who says so?"

"I say so. I've got a bill of sale of her in my pocket."

"I don't recognize it. The law will have something to say about that later."

"I don't care what the law may say later. I'm talking right now. We own this steamer. What you say is all bluff. What are you here for?"

"Well, I may have bluffed a little," confessed Simpson placatingly. "I expected to find her abandoned. The truth is, Thornton, I left quite a lot of little personal belongings on her—I went away in a hurry. I want to come aboard with this valise and get 'em."

"They must be pretty valuable belongings, seeing that you've chartered a tug to come out here."

"A fellow's own property means more to him than it does to anybody else. Now that I've gone to all this expense, Thornton, you ain't mean enough, are you, to keep me off? This is between sailors."

"You're not here with any legal papers—you're not trying any trick to get possession, are you?"

"Take all in hearing to witness that I ain't! I'll pick up my stuff and leave in ten minutes."

"Come aboard, then."

Simpson set down his suit case and hitched a heave line to the handle. He coiled the line and handed it to a deck hand.

"Throw that to me when I'm on deck," he ordered. Then he came up the ladder.

"Heave, and I'll hoist up the bag," suggested Thornton, at the rail.

"Wait till I get there," barked Simpson, still climbing.

He caught the line after he had reached the rail, and pulled up the case with some effort and great care.

"Look here, that bag isn't empty," said Thornton.

"Who said it was? I'm carrying around in it all I own in the world. I'm starting for New York as soon as this tug sets me ashore."

He picked up the case and started for the officers' quarters.

Thornton went along, too.

"You afraid I'm going to steal her engine out of her?" demanded the former second officer, pausing and turning on his pursuer. "The few little things of mine I'm after were hidden away, and that's how I forgot 'em. Now,

don't insult me by following me around as if I was a thief."

"I don't know just what you are, Simpson," muttered the young man. "There's something that looks mighty phony about this, but I haven't got you sized up just yet."

"I'll go back—go back right now. I supposed I was asking a favor of a gentleman and a brother officer." He started on his return to the ladder.

"Go get your stuff," commanded Thornton. "If your business here is all your own, I don't want to spy on you."

He went back to question the captain of the tug for information in regard to the *Ethel and May,* and Simpson disappeared.

"She's in Limeport," reported the captain, elbows on his window sill. "Came past her in the inner harbor this morning. You've bit off quite a chunk here, haven't you? We all thought this storm had sluiced her. Made quite a stir up and down the water front when old Candage blew along and reported that she had lived it out. Marston Adams is taking the news worse than he would a doctor's report that he'd have to have his leg amputated."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, he's in Limeport. Probably hiked down to be present at the funeral of the Bee Line company—but not as a mourner—hey?" The captain took a chew of tobacco and winked at Thornton.

The young man's face grew white, and then red, and he cracked his fist on the rail.

"By the gods, now I know who chartered this tug!" he shouted. "What kind of a fool am I getting to be?"

He turned and ran toward the officers' quarters. He leaped into the main passageway, and explored headlong the staterooms. There was no sign of Simpson.

At that moment, in the tumult of his thoughts, he had only a glimmering of an idea as to what might be the motive of Simpson's visit. But he was certain, now, that the man whom he had already suspected as the tool of the magnate had come on some sinister errand. A wretch who had deliberately wrecked a rival steamer—if Candage's suspicions were correct—would do almost anything else for money.

A narrow companionway with brass rails led below to the crew's quarters.

Thornton, coming to the head of it, saw Simpson hurrying to its foot. The young man grasped the rails and slid down with one swoop.

"What in the devil's name you doing?" he gasped.

Simpson grabbed him and threw him to one side, and started up the companionway. He had dropped the suit case to seize Thornton, and it bounced in a way to show that it was empty.

Thornton leaped and grasped Simpson's legs as he was mounting. The man kicked him ferociously in the breast before Thornton managed to pinion the legs in his arms. They went down together, rolling over and over.

Simpson was stocky and strong, his muscles toughened by a sailor's activities. Moreover, he seemed to be animated by something more than a mere grudge or desire to defend himself; he fought with frenzy, beating his fists into Thornton's face and sides as they rolled. He began to shout. He fairly screamed, struggling to release himself.

But his assailant was just as tough and just as desperate, and he had a younger man's superior agility. The other had forced the fight. Thornton proposed to hang to him until he discovered the meaning of this peculiar ferocity of Mr. Simpson.

Thornton's suppleness helped him. He flipped across Simpson, clutched him by both ears, and rapped the man's head so smartly on the deck planks

that Simpson relaxed, half unconscious.

Then he opened staring eyes.

"Let me go! Let me go! I quit. Run for it—let me run. We're goners!" he squalled.

"Run? Why?" demanded the victor.

"Dynamite! I've planted it. The fuse is going."

"Where is it?"

"Below—somewheres—I've forgot—I can't remember. My mind is gone. I'm too scared to think. Run!"

Thornton jumped up and yanked Simpson to his feet.

"Take me to it!" he shouted.

"There ain't time—I guessed at the fuse—it may burn quicker than I reckoned."

Thornton drove his fist into Simpson's face and knocked him down. Then he jerked him upright again.

"Take me where you've planted that dynamite, or we'll stay here and go up together. And now you know I mean what I say."

The last blow had cowed his man; he raised his fist again.

Simpson leaped away from him, and ran along the lower deck, Thornton at his heels. He led the way aft. In the gloom of between decks, there gleamed a red spark. Thornton rushed to it, whipped off his cap, and snuffed the baleful glow. When he was sure that the fuse was dead, he heard Simpson scrambling up the companion ladder. He pursued, and caught his quarry as he gained the upper deck. He buffeted the man about the ears, and forced him into a stateroom.

"This means State prison for you, Simpson. You were guilty of barratry before, and you know it! How did you dare to try this last trick?"

"I had my orders."

"Orders from what man?"

"No matter. You needn't ask. I won't tell." Simpson was sullen, and had recovered some of his assurance, now that his fear of the dynamite was removed.

"You're a lunatic. You ought to have known you couldn't pull off a thing of this kind."

"I don't know about that! It was working pretty slick. If she had split and gone off these ledges, you couldn't have proved anything special. Wrecks cut up queer capers, Thornton. As it stands about that dynamite, it's my word against yours. And I've got good backing. You better let me go."

Thornton glared at him, deprived of speech by this effrontery.

"You'd better come over with the big fellows," advised Simpson. "I can tell you right now that every hole in Limeport has been plugged against you. You can't hire equipment there, or get a cent's credit. It has all been nicely attended to. You're here fooling with a dead duck. You'd be better off if that dynamite had been let alone to split her."

"Simpson, I've changed my mind about you in the last ten seconds. I intended to tie you up and keep you here till I could put you where you belong—in jail. But I don't want such a worthless skunk underfoot here. You'd take my mind off my job. I'll send you back to the man who hired you—and I won't call any names just now. I ought to send you back as they sent rascals in the old days to the men who hired them for dirty work—with your ears chopped off. I'll simply send you this way."

He set heavy hands on the other's shoulders and forced him out on deck. Then he chased him along the softened ice to the ladder, kicking him as he ran.

Simpson flung himself over the rail, and slid down the ladder to the tug, whimpering curses and threats. The two men on the steamer and the crew of the tug surveyed the scene with lively interest.

"Cast off that line!" ordered the young man. He scowled down into the astonished eyes of the tug's captain.

"I'd advise you to pick a better class of passengers if you're going to run trips out this way. Please report ashore that no other boats will be allowed to come alongside here—not if I have to stand 'em off with guns. This is private property."

The captain nodded, closed his pilothouse window, and clanged his bell. Thornton knew by his mystified air that he was not in the confidence of Simpson and his employer.

He watched the departure of the tug, sourly surveying Simpson, who shook his fists like an insane professor of calisthenics.

This crude, bold, bungling, barefaced attempt to destroy the steamer touched Thornton's pride as deeply as it stirred his wrath. He was certain in his own mind that Marston Adams was behind Simpson. The magnate evidently viewed the pretensions of the new ownership with contempt. He must have belief in his own power to ruin and to escape consequences, pondered the young man. He had put Thornton and his associates on the plane of the ordinary piratical wreckers of the coast—men who grabbed without law or right, who must be prepared to fight other pirates of the same ilk, and whose affairs could have no standing in a court of law. It was plain that Adams still looked on Thornton as a mere renegade employee whom he could persecute with impunity. That thought both humiliated and goaded the young man.

Even more disquieting were Simpson's statements that the avenues of credit ashore had been closed. A man in Adams' position could ruin the project even more effectually in that way than with dynamite. But now that the *Conomo* had withstood the battering of a gale and was bulked there, a visible pledge of value, it did seem that Captain Candage must be able to find somebody who would back them.

For two days he waited with much impatience, he and his men doing such preliminary work as offered itself.

On the third day came the schooner. She came listlessly, under a light wind, and her limp sails seemed to express discouragement and disappointment. Thornton, gazing across to her as she approached, received that impression in spite of his hopes. He got a glimpse of Captain Candage's face, as he came to the steamer's side in his dory, and his fears were confirmed.

"'Tain't no use," was the skipper's laconic report, as he swung up the ladder.

"You mean to say you didn't get a rise out of anybody?"

"Nothing doing nowhere. Old Adams is in Limeport, and he is spreading talk that we ain't got law or prospects. Got a few men to listen to me, but they shooed me off when they found that we wouldn't take 'em in and give 'em all the profits. Went to Maquit and tried to get Deacon Rowley into the thing—and when I go and beg favors of Deacon Rowley, you can see how desperate I am. He's a cash-down fellow—you have found that out."

"But couldn't you show him that this is the best gamble on the coast?"

"He ain't a gambler—he's a sure-thing operator. And when he knew that we had put in all our cash, he threatened to take the schooner away from us unless we go back to fishing, and 'be sensible'—that's the way he put it. So then him and me had that postponed row."

"But look at her," pleaded Thornton, waving his hand. "Ice off her, sound in all her rivets after her beating—if we could get the right men out here now——"

"I ain't confident, myself, no more," stated Captain Candage, running an eye of disfavor over their property.

"If ye get out here away from level-headed business men and dream about what might happen, you can fool yourself. I can see how it is with you. But I've been ashore, and I've got it put to me good and plenty. I did think of one way of getting some money—but I come to my senses and give it up."

"Getting money—how?"

"No matter. I'd cut off both hands before I'd let them hands take that money for a desp'rit' thing like this. Let's sell her for scrap to the first man who'll take her—and then mind our own business and go fishing."

"Will you take your turn aboard here and let me go ashore?"

"There ain't no sense in us wasting more time."

"I've done my trick here, Captain Candage, and it has been a good one. You listen!" He narrated the circumstances of the visit of Officer Simpson—the old man goggling with eyes wide and mouth agape. "I only ask you to take your trick, as a shipmate should. Keep a dozen of the men here with you. There's plenty of grub. Stand off all comers till I get back."

"What are you going to do?"

"Make a man's try, sir, before I let 'em dump us. We can always go fishing. But there's only one *Conomo*."

"I'll stay—it's only fair to you to have your chance ashore. And I've got an almighty good rifle aboard that schooner," stated the skipper. "Send it to me by one of the men."

Half an hour later, as Thornton was going over the steamer's rail on his way to the schooner, Captain Candage remarked casually: "Oh, by the way, my Polly wanted to be remembered to you with her best regards. She seems to be pretty well contented there at Maquit. Don't fuss none about going back up country to her aunt. I told her she could go ahead and write to her beau all she wanted to. That seemed to please her."

"I'm sure your daughter hasn't picked out any young man who won't be a credit to both of you," declared Thornton.

"I'm going to tell you what else she said, even if it does rasp me," said Captain Candage grimly. "She says for you to keep up your courage and not mind my growling. And that shows that a girl don't know much about men's work or a tough proposition."

CHAPTER XIV.

POLLY CANDAGE, CAPITALIST.

One week later the *Ethel and May* sneaked her way into Maquit harbor—if a schooner can be said to sneak. A listless breeze at nightfall fanned her along, and when her killick went down, the rusty chain groaned querulously from her hawse hole.

Thornton rowed ashore and toiled his way up the little street to the widow's cottage. He was ashamed to meet Polly Candage—ashamed with the feelings of a strong man who has put out every effort and has failed. But somehow he wanted to feel that sisterly grip of her hand and look down into those encouraging gray eyes. He remembered that in times past she had soothed and stimulated him. This time he did not come to her expecting to get new courage for further effort; he had exhausted all resources, he told himself. But in his bitter humiliation he needed the companionship of—yes, he felt, almost, that she was now the only friend he had left. His experiences with those whom he had before looked on as friends had made him feel that he stood alone.

She came running to him in the little parlor, her hands outstretched and her face alight.

He felt at first sight of her—and his face flushed at thought of his weak-

ness—that he wanted to put his head on her shoulder and weep.

"You poor boy, things have not been going well!"

He choked, for the caress in her tones touched his heart. He patted her hands, and she sat down beside him on the old haircloth sofa.

"I've had a terrible week of it, Polly." He gasped as her name slipped from his lips. "I didn't mean to call you that. I forgot—but somehow you seem as if you were my sister."

Her sweet smile did not waver. The gray eyes stared straight into his.

"That is my name—for you, brother Lawrence Thornton."

"I have talked to 'em till my mouth has been parched and my tongue sore—and God knows my heart is sore. All they do is look at me and shake their heads. I thought I had friends along shore—men who believed in me—men who would take my word and help me. I'll never be fooled again by the fellows who pat you on the back in sunny weather—and won't lend you an umbrella when it rains, unless you'll leave your watch with 'em for security. And speaking of the watch," he went on, smiling wistfully, for her mere presence and her unspoken sympathy had begun to cheer him, "reminds me why I'm here in Maquit. Oh, yes," he put in hastily, catching a queer look of disappointment on her face, "I did want to see you. I looked forward to seeing you after all the others had turned their backs on me. There's something wonderfully comforting in your face, Polly, when you just look at me—you don't have to say a word."

"I do thank you, Lawrence."

"I hear that Rowley is getting uneasy about his schooner—wants to take it away from us. So I have sold my watch and all the other bits of personal things I could turn into cash, and am here to give him the money and tell him we're going back to fishing again."

"You'll give up the steamer?"

"Yes—and hopes, and prospects, and all. I've got to."

"But, Lawrence, if you could win, then you—you—her father could not twit you of being a fortune hunter!"

"I'll stay down where I belong. I won't dream any more."

"Don't give up."

"There's nothing else to do. We poor devils need something beside our bare hands."

The girl struggled mightily with her next question, but he did not note her distress, for his elbows were on his knees and he was staring at the rag carpet.

"You love her, and you would always mourn for her, wouldn't you, Lawrence?"

"Yes."

"I suppose girls in her position can't do as poor girls would do—go away and marry the man they want, money or no money?"

"I couldn't ask her—I wouldn't take her away from what she has now."

"Will it cost a lot of money for what you want to do on the steamer?"

"We may need a lot before we can do it all. But I have been sitting up nights planning the thing, Polly. I have gone over and over it. When I was on board the steamer waiting for your father, I examined her as best I could. If I had a little money, I could make a start, and after I started and could show the doubters what could be done, I could raise more money then, I am sure of it. Of course, the first investment is the most dangerous gamble, and that's why everybody is shy. But I believe my scheme would work—though I can't seem to get anybody else to believe it."

"Will I understand if you'll tell me?"

"I'd get a diver's outfit and material, and build bulkheads in her, both sides of the hole in her bottom. Then I'd

have an engine and pumps, and show that I could get the water out of her—or enough of it so that she'd float."

"But the big hole—you wouldn't mend that?"

"I think we could brace the bulkheads so that we could hold the water out of both ends of her and let the main hole in her alone."

"And she wouldn't sink?"

He was patient with the girl's unwisdom in the ways of the sea.

"Since you've been here at Maquit, Polly, you have seen the lobster smacks with what they call 'wells' in them—all amidships is full of water, you know—comes in through holes bored in the hull—fresh sea water that swashes in and out and keeps the lobsters alive till they get to market. But the vessel is tight at both ends, and she floats. Well, that's what I plan to do with the *Conomo*. With a few thousand dollars I'm sure I can make enough of a start so I can show 'em the rest can be done." He promptly lost the bit of enthusiasm he had shown while he was explaining. He began his gloomy survey of the carpet once more. "But it's no use. Nobody will listen to a man who wants to borrow money on a wild hope."

She was silent a long time, and gazed at him, and he did not realize that he was the object of such intent regard. Several times she opened her mouth, and seemed about to address him eagerly—for her eyes were brilliant and her cheeks were flushed.

"I wish I had the money to lend you," she ventured at last.

"Oh, I wouldn't take it—not from a girl, Polly. No, indeed! This is a gamble for men—not an investment for the widow and orphan," he declared, smiling at her. "I believe in it—that's because I'm desperate and need to win to make good in the biggest thing of my life."

She turned her face away and grew pale.

"Yes, love is the biggest thing in life, Lawrence."

She flushed very rosily again at his next words: "I guess I wasn't thinking of love just then, Polly. Just then the biggest thing in the world to me was getting that steamer off Razee and showing that infernal old Adams and all his 'long-coast gang that I'm no four-flusher. I've got it in for that man!"

He patted the hands she clasped on her knees, and he did not notice that she was locking her fingers so tightly that they were almost bloodless. He rose and started for the door.

"I'll go and pacify Rowley to-night, and be ready for an early start."

"Lawrence," she pleaded, "will you do me a little favor?"

"Most certainly, Polly."

"Wait till to-morrow morning for your business with Mr. Rowley."

"Why? He looked at her with considerable surprise.

"Because—well, because you are a bit unstrung, and are tired, and you and he might have words, and you might not use your cool judgment, if he should be short with you. You know, you are just a little at odds with all the world just now!" She spoke nervously, and smiled wistfully. "I would be sorry to have you quarrel with Mr. Rowley because—well, father is a partner, and has already had words with him. Please wait till morning. You must not lose the schooner!"

"I'm too far down and out to dare to quarrel with Rowley—but I'll do as you say, Polly. Good night."

"You're a good boy to obey a girl's whim. Good night."

The moment his foot was off the last step of the porch, she hurried to her room in the cottage and secured a little packet from her portfolio.

She heard the thud of his dory oars as she walked down the street. She

was glad to know that he was safely out of the way.

Rowley's dingy windows shed a dim blur upon the frosty night. It was near time for him to close his store, and he was turning out the loafers who had been cuddling close to his barrel stove.

After a few moments of waiting, the girl was alone with him.

"No, I do not want to buy anything, Mr. Rowley. I need your help. I ask you to help me to do a good deed."

He pulled his spectacles to the end of his nose, and stared at her doubtfully and with curiosity.

"If it's about the schooner, I'd rather do business with menfolks," he said.

"This is business that only you and I can do—and it must be a secret between us. Will you please glance at this bank book?"

He licked a thin finger and turned the leaves.

"Deposit of five thousand dollars and accrued interest," he observed, resuming his inquisitive inspection of her animated countenance.

"My mother's sister left me that legacy—it's all my little fortune, sir. I want to loan that money to my father and Captain Thornton."

"Well, go ahead, if you're fool enough to—I ain't your guardeen," assented Deacon Rowley, holding the book out to her. "But I advise you to keep your money. I know all about their foolishness."

"My father wouldn't take it from me—and Captain Thornton wouldn't, either."

"That shows they ain't knaves on top of being fools."

"But I have faith that they can succeed and make a lot of money if they get a start," she insisted. "I see you do not understand, sir, what I need of you. I want you to lend them that money, just as if it came from you. I'll give you the book and a writing, and you can draw it."

"No, ma'am."

"Won't you help a girl who needs help so much? You're a Christian man, you say."

"That's just why I can't lie about this money. I'll have to tell 'em I'm lending it."

"You will be lending it."

"How's that, miss?"

"For your trouble in the matter I'll let you collect the interest for yourself at six per cent. Oh, Deacon Rowley, all you need to do is hand over the money—and say you prefer not to talk about it. You're a smart business man—you'll know what to say without speaking a falsehood. You'll break my heart if you refuse. Think! You're only helping me to help my own father. He has foolish notions about this. You can say you'll let them have it for a year, and you'll get three hundred dollars interest for your trouble."

"I don't believe they'll ever make enough to pay the interest—much less the principal."

"Give them five thousand dollars and draw a year's interest for yourself out of my interest that has accrued."

"Say, how old be you?"

"I'll be twenty-two in June."

Deacon Rowley looked at her calculatingly, fingering his nose.

"Being of age, you ought to know better—but being of age, you can do what you want to with your own. Do you promise never to let on to anybody about this?"

"I do promise—solemnly."

"Then you sign some papers when I get 'em drawn up, and I'll hand 'em the money—but look-a-here, if I go chasing 'em with five thousand dollars, I'll have 'em suspecting that I'm crazy, or something worse. It ain't like Absalom Rowley to do a thing of this sort with his money."

"I know it," she confessed, softening her remark with an ingenuous smile. "But Captain Thornton is coming to

you to-morrow morning on business about the schooner, and you can put the matter to him in some way—oh, I know you're so keen and smart you can do it without his suspecting a thing."

"I don't know whether you're complimenting me or sassing me, miss. But I'll see it through, somehow."

She signed the papers, giving him power of attorney, left her bank book with him, and went away into the night, her face radiant.

She threw a happy kiss at the dim anchor light which marked the location of the *Ethel and May* in the harbor.

"I am helping you get the girl you love," she said aloud.

She went on toward the widow's cottage. Her head was erect, but there were tears on her cheeks.

CHAPTER XV.

AN IDEA, AND HOW IT WORKED.

Polly Candage, covering her emotions with that mask of demureness which nature lends to the weaker sex for their protection, received a very tumultuous Thornton next morning in the parlor of the cottage.

"I don't know how it has happened —I don't understand it," he exploded. "I didn't suppose anybody could blast money out of his pocket with dynamite —your father said it couldn't be done. But Deacon Rowley has loaned us five thousand dollars. Here's his check on the Limeport First National. Only charges six per cent. I'm so weak it was all I could do to walk up here."

"What did he say to explain it?" inquired Polly, with maiden's curiosity as to what extent of prevarication a deacon would go in order to make three hundred dollars.

"Wouldn't say much of anything. Handed out this check, said my indorsement on it would be enough for a receipt, and said your father and I could sign a joint note later—some time—when he got around to it. Have you heard any rumor that the old fellow is losing his mind? But this check looks good!"

"Well, I think he's been pondering on the matter since father was here. In fact, Deacon Rowley has said a few things to me," said the girl, meeting Thornton's gaze frankly. "Not much, of course, but something that hinted he had a lot of confidence in both of you, seeing that you have used him nicely in the other business he has done with you. Sometimes, you know, these hard old Yankees take a liking to somebody and do things all of a sudden."

"This is sudden, all right enough," stated Thornton, scratching the serrated edge of the check across his palm, as if to make sure it was real and not a shadow. "Yes, he told me not to mention the note to him till he said something to us about it himself—and to keep quiet about the loan. Didn't want others running to him with their schemes."

"And if I were in your place," advised the girl, "I wouldn't tell father where you got the money—not for a time. You know, he doesn't get along so very well with Deacon Rowley—two old folks do quarrel so—and he might be worried, thinking the deacon had some scheme behind this. But you don't think that way, do you?"

"I've got the money, and he hasn't asked me to sign any papers. There's no comeback there, far as I can see," declared the young man.

"Now what will you do?"

"Rush for Limeport, buy or hire equipment—for I've cash to pay in advance for any leases—and get to that wreck and onto my job."

"Simply tell father you raised the money—from a friend! If he is worrying about anything he doesn't work half as well. I'll ask God to help and bless you every hour in the day."

"Polly Candage," cried Thornton,

taking her warm, plump hands, "there's something about you that has put courage, and grit, and determination in me ever since you patted my shoulder there in the old *Polly*. I have been thinking it over a lot—I had time to think when I was out aboard that steamer, waiting."

"There's only one girl for you to think about," she chided.

His face clouded.

"I suppose that's so. But I have caught myself thinking most about her father lately—and it's the kind of thinking that isn't healthy for a man with a normal mind. Thank the Lord, I've got some real work to think about now—and the cash to do that work with." He fondled his pocket.

She went with him to the wharf, and when the schooner slid to sea behind Hue and Cry, her white handkerchief gave him final salute and silent Godspeed.

Captain Lawrence Thornton, back in Limeport once more, was not the cowed, apologetic, pleading suppliant who had bearded the water-front machinists and shipyard owners a few days before. He proffered no checks for them to look askance at. He pulled a wallet that was plethoric with new yellowbacks. He showed that money often, and with a purpose. He drove sharp bargains while he held it in view. He received offers of credit in places where before he had been denied. Such magic does visible wealth exert in the dealings between men!

He did not come across Marston Adams in Limeport, and he was glad of that. Somebody informed him that the magnate had gone back to New York. It was manifest to Thornton that in his contempt Adams had decided that the salvaging of the *Conomo* intact had been relegated to the storehouse of dreams. His purpose would be suited if she were junked, so the young man realized. Only the *Conomo* afloat, a successful pioneer in new transportation experiments along coast, would threaten his vested interests.

There had been wintry winds and intervening calms in the days since Thornton had been prosecuting his projects ashore. But by word of mouth from straying fishermen and captains of packets, he had been assured that the steamer still stuck on Razee.

And when at last he was equipped, he went forth from Limeport; he went blithely, although he knew that a Titan job faced him. He kept his own counsel as to what he proposed to do with the steamer. He even allowed the water-front gossips to guess, unchallenged, that he was going to junk the wreck. He was not inviting more of that brazen hostility that characterized the operations of Adams and his hirelings.

He was at the wheel of a husky lighter which he had chartered along with its engineer; the rest of the crew he supplied from his own men. The lighter was driven by its own power, and carried a good pump and a sturdy crane; its decks were loaded high with coal. The schooner was now merely convoy. It was an all-day trip to Razee, for the lighter was a slow and clumsy craft, but when Thornton at last made fast to the side of the *Conomo* and squealed a shrill salute with the whistle, the joy he found in Captain Candage's rubicund countenance made amends for anxiety and delay.

"I knew you'd make a go of it, somehow," vouchsafed the old skipper. "But who did you have to knock down in a dark place so as to steal this money off'm him?"

"That's private business till we get ready to pay it back with six per cent interest," stated the young man bluntly.

"Oh, very well. So long as we've got it, I don't care where you stole it," returned Candage, with great serenity. "I simply know that you didn't get it from skinflint Rowley, and that's com-

fort enough for me. Let me tell you that we haven't been loafing on board here. We rigged that taakul you see aloft, and jettisoned all the cargo we could get at—it was all spoiled by the water. There's pretty free space for operations midships. I've got out all her spare cable, and it's ready."

"And you've done a good job there, sir. We've got to make this lighter fast alongside in such a way that a blow won't wreck her against us. Spring cables—plenty of them—and we are sailors enough to know how to moor. But when I think of what amateurs we are in the rest of this job, cold shivers run over me."

"That Limeport water-front crowd got at you, too, hey?"

"Captain Candage, I have watched men more or less in this life. It's sometimes a mighty big handicap for a man to be too wise. While the awfully wise man sits back and shakes his head and figures prospects and says it can't be done, the fool rushes in, because he doesn't know any better, and blunders the job through and wins out. Let's keep on being fools, good and plenty, but keep busy just the same."

And on that basis the rank amateurs of Razee proceeded with all the grit that was in them.

The men of Hue and Cry had plenty of muscle and little wit. They asked no questions, they did not look forward gloomily to doubtful prospects. The same philosophy, or lack of it, that had always made life full of merry hope when their stomachs were filled—taking no thought of the morrow—animated them now. Fate had given Thornton and his associate an ideal crew for that parlous job. It was not a question of union hours and stated wages—they worked all night just as cheerily as they worked all day.

This tale cannot be a chronicle of wrecking details and engineering specifications.

An epic of the sea was lived there on Razee Reef during the weeks that followed.

The task which was wrought out would make a story in itself, far beyond the confines of such a narrative as this must be.

Bitter toil of many days often proved to be a sad mistake, for the men who wrought there had more courage in endeavor than good understanding of methods.

Then, after disappointment, hope revived, for further effort avoided the mistakes that had been so costly.

The brunt of the toil, the duty of being pioneer, fell on Thornton.

He donned diving suit and descended into the riven bowels of the wreck and cleared the way for the others.

On deck they built sections of bulkhead, and he went down and groped in the murky water and spiked the braces and set those sections and calked the spaces between bulkhead and hull.

There were storms that menaced their lighter and drove the little schooner to sea in a welter of tempest.

There were calms that cheered them with promise of spring.

The schooner was the errand boy that brought supplies and coal from the main. But the men who went ashore refused to gossip on the water front, and the occasional craft that hove to in the vicinity of Razee were not allowed to land inquisitive persons on the wreck.

After many weeks the bulkheads were set, and the pumps were started. There were three crews for these pumps, and their clanking never ceased, day or night. There was less water in the fore part; her bow was propped high on the ledges. The progress here was encouraging.

Aft, were disasters. Three times the bulkhead crumpled under the tremendous pressure of the sea as soon as the pumps had relieved the opposing pres-

sure within the hull. Thornton, haggard, unkempt, unshorn, thin with his vigils, stayed under water in his diving dress until he became the wreck of a man. But at last they built a transverse section that promised to hold. The pumps began to make gains on the water. As the flood within was lowered and they could get at the bulkhead more effectively from the inside, they kept adding to it and strengthening it.

And then came the need of more material and more equipment, for the gigantic job of floating the steamer was still ahead of them.

Thornton felt that he had proved his theory and was now in a position to enlist the capital that would see them through. He could show a hull that was sound except for the rent amidships—a hull from both ends of which the trespassing sea was being evicted. With the money that would furnish buoying lighters and tugs and the massive equipment for floating her, he felt that he would be able to convert that helpless mass of junk into a steamer once more—change scrap iron into an active value of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

And when he and Captain Candage had arrived at that hopeful and earnest belief, following days of tremulous watching of the work the pumps were doing, the young man went again to the main on his momentous errand.

He no longer had the fat wallet. Their funds were exhausted. But now he had something to show the doubters besides a water-logged hull that was perched precariously on a ledge with the winter storms gathering to beat upon it. The winter storms were past.

As they sailed into Limeport, Thornton was a bit astonished to see hints of April green on the sloping hills. He had been living in a waking dream of mighty toil on Razee; he had almost forgotten that so many weeks had gone past.

When he went ashore in his dory from the schooner, the balmy breath of spring breathed out to him from budding gardens, and the warm breeze fanned his roughened cheeks.

As he had forgotten that spring had come, so had he forgotten about his personal appearance. He had rushed ashore from a man's job that was now waiting for him to rush back to it. He did not realize that he looked like a cave man—resembled some shaggy, prehistoric human; his mind was too full of his affairs on Razee.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARSTON ADAMS AND DAUGHTER.

When Captain Thornton strode down the main street of Limeport, it troubled him not a whit because folks gaped at him and turned to stare after him.

He had torn himself from his gigantic task for only one purpose, and that idea filled his mind.

He was ragged, his hands were swollen, purple, cut, and raw from his diver's labors, his hair hung upon his collar, and a beard masked his face. They who thronged the streets were taking advantage of the first warm days to show their spring finery. The contrast of this rude figure from the open sea was made all the more striking as he brushed through the crowds.

Here and there he bolted into offices where there were men he knew and whom he hoped to interest. He had no fat wallet to exhibit to them this time. He had only his empty, swollen hands and a wild, eager, stammering story of what he expected to do. They stared at him, many of them stupidly, some of them frankly incredulous, most of them without particular interest. He looked like a man who had failed miserably; there was nothing about him to suggest success.

One man put the matter succinctly:

"Look here, Thornton, if you came

in here, looking the way you do, and asked me for a quarter to buy a meal with, I'd think it was perfectly natural, and would slip you the quarter. But not ten thousand—you don't look the part."

"What have my clothes got to do with it? I haven't time to think about clothes. I can't wear a plug hat in a diving suit. I've been working. And I'm still on the job. The way I look ought to show you that I mean business."

But they turned him down. In half a dozen offices they listened and shook their heads or curtly refused to look into the thing. He had not come ashore to beg for assistance as if it were a favor. He had come feeling certain that this time he had a valuable thing to offer. His labors had wracked his body, his nerves were on edge, his temper was short. When they refused to help, he cursed them and tore out. That they allowed his personal appearance to influence their judgment stirred his fury—it was so unjust to his self-sacrificing devotion to his task.

He soon exhausted his circle of acquaintances, but the rebuffs made him angry instead of despondent. Towering above the heads of pedestrians who were urbane and sleek, he marched along the street, scowling.

And then his eyes fell on a face that gave a fresh stir to all the bitterness that was in him.

He saw Marston Adams.

The magnate was standing at the sidewalk's edge, just outside the vestibule of the city's most pretentious hotel. His black cigar was pegged into the middle of the patch of close, gray beard, and he seemed to have little business on hand at just that moment.

Under other circumstances, Thornton might have passed. But the presence of this man in the city had apparent connection with the treatment that had been accorded to him by those with whom he had been trying to do business. Memory of what Adams had done before to shut up avenues of credit became a very poignant recollection at that moment.

Thornton halted so suddenly, presented a hideous fist so threateningly, and barked so brusquely, that Adams started back with considerable trepidation.

"I want to serve notice on you, Adams, that you can't kill me in this thing. But if you send any more hyenas like Art Simpson out to Razee, *I'll* do some killing."

"I'll be cursed if I knew you, captain, till you spoke."

"You know me now. You'll know me better if you don't keep your hands off my business."

"I'm afraid you have got the thing sized up wrong, Thornton."

"I've got it sized up exactly right. We won't have any joint debate on it, sir. I warn you to let us alone. Good day!"

"Hold on, Thornton! I want you to come up into my room and have a little private talk with me."

"No, sir."

"You're not afraid of me, are you?"

"Do I look as if I were?" demanded the young man truculently.

"I'm only asking you to come and talk business. If you haven't lost your mind along with your looks, you'll meet a business man halfway, won't you?"

"I'll come with you—if it's business," said Thornton. The cold eyes of the magnate challenged him, and he felt a little ashamed of his rather boyish heat.

He followed Adams into the hotel, and climbed the stairs with him to the first floor above the office. They entered a room that was one of a suite, and when the young man sat down on one of the deep, cushioned chairs, he felt ill at ease in spite of himself. He had caught a glimpse of his face and his figure in a long mirror as he entered.

The room was luxuriously furnished, and he had not been in similar surroundings for months. He had not realized, till he saw that reflection of himself, how unkempt and uncouth he was. He looked like a shaggy beast in a boudoir.

"Will you smoke?"

"No," he snapped, in answer to Adams' politeness.

"I'm going to make a short story of my end of this thing, captain. I'm going to be perfectly honest with you—now, seeing that the thing has gone as far as it has. For instance—notice that I'm honest—I didn't believe you'd ever save that steamer through the first blow."

"And after we had saved her—or she saved herself—you sent a man out to blow her in two."

"Not proved. Hired men take a lot on themselves, sometimes. Let's stick to business. I've got a line on you since I got back here. You're getting the water out of her. That doesn't mean that you'll be able to float her. I know a lot about wrecking operations, myself."

"I do—*now!* We're going to get that steamer off Razee. You wouldn't be bothering to talk to me if you didn't think so yourself."

"I insist you've only got a prospect, as it stands."

"It's a hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar prospect, Adams, and seeing that with you it's only money that counts in this world, I can talk to you different from what I could last August. I'm not trying to brag, but I want you to understand that I'm no chauffeur for you to-day."

"Don't be childish," reproved the other. "I admit that you're some chap, Thornton. That's why I want to do business with you. I'm willing to forget a lot of things I said about you and thought about you. Meet me halfway, and you and I can get together on a mighty fine basis."

"Go ahead and show your hand, sir."

There was a pause, during which the magnate studied his visitor.

"You're a young man, just starting, and it's better to make a sure thing out of this than take a chance. I'll give you a sure thing."

"How?"

"I'll take that steamer off your hands, as she stands, and give you fifty thousand dollars' worth of stock in my company in payment for her. I shall junk her. If she is killed, as she stands, the gang that built her will think twice before they try another one on this line. Furthermore, Thornton, I'll make you general manager of my line—I need a hustler."

"That may sound like business talk to you, sir, but it doesn't to me," declared the young man.

"What's the matter with it?"

"You're simply bribing me—taking me into camp. Mr. Adams, the minute I took those terms you'd put me right down on the same basis where you had me before—you'd consider me a hired man. No, sir! I'll never work for you again!"

"Confound it! I'm making you a partner."

"I've got a partner of my own just now—a partner who has frozen, and sweat, and starved, and worked with me out on Razee Reef. I'm not going to sell him out."

"What are your writings with old Candage?"

"Not the scratch of a pen as yet."

"He was never more than five thousand dollars ahead of the game in his life. He's one of the old growlers who took it as a personal grievance because we put on barges. You and I can fix it with him—make him satisfied. I'll raise that price a little—I'll be honest! I want to get that confounded cargo carrier off the sea. If their first ex-

periment fails—no matter what busted her—they'll go slow on another one. Now, captain, use your common sense, and come in with me. We'll forget what has happened."

His eyes were studying the young man as he talked. He was not finding much encouragement in the mien and expression of this cantankerous rival.

He leaped suddenly, and flung open the door that admitted to another room.

"Leah, come in here," he called. "Captain Thornton is making a call on me."

The young man struggled up out of the chair, protest on his face, and in his incoherent words. Astonishment because she was there, strange, mingled sentiments of longing to see her, desire to avoid her, and bitter resentment because her father seemed to be making her a bait to catch this gudgeon that he was trying to hook, swept through the young man's soul.

He realized, when he first saw her face, that she was not a party to any plot that Adams might have contrived. She was not looking in his direction when she hurried to the door. She was staring at her father, and her expression was that of utter consternation. That curt announcement had plainly overwhelmed her. She gave only one glance at Thornton, and then turned again to her father.

"You said—Captain Thornton," she stammered.

Never was lover more pitifully at a loss. He could not rush to her—that other time when she had been in his arms, with her father looking on, was too recent and distressing a memory. As she stood there in her dainty apparel, she seemed more remote than ever before. He wondered if he had not dreamed that she had said once that she loved him. He could view himself in the mirror as he took one step toward her, and then he moved to one side to avoid that spectacle; he looked like a vagrant from the slums. She turned to him again, and he understood what her horrified stare meant.

But he did not know what to say to her; he stood before her, mute, overwhelmed, hiding his poor, mutilated hands.

"Captain Thornton isn't exactly what he looks to be, Leah," remarked Adams, a bit of dry sarcasm in his tones. "He isn't a down-and-outer because I discharged him."

"I don't thank you for putting me on exhibition in this fashion, Mr. Adams," protested the young man, his indignation giving him a voice.

"I'll square you, Thornton. Leah, this young man has been making good. I have said some pretty harsh things to you about him, but now you'll understand that I'm fair when the right time comes. I have just offered him a partnership in my company and the position of general manager."

"You are going to be father's partner?" she gasped.

The cruelty of that test of him—that method of taking him into camp—that devilish tempting him to betrayal of his helpless associates—whetted an edge on his none too equable temper of those days.

"You will work with father from now on?" she asked.

"No," he found the courage to say.

"Look here, Thornton, I have offered to square you," warned Adams.

"You certainly are not refusing to become a partner with my father," she cried.

"You don't understand."

"I'm afraid neither of us can understand your turning me down, after I've met you more than halfway," said Adams.

"You'll not refuse such an opportunity," insisted the girl. "Too much depends on it."

Thornton divided piteous glances between the two of them. The founda-

tions of his little world were rocking under his feet. How could he explain to this girl the man's side of this thing? How could he make her understand what he owed to those men who had risked their lives to help him? He held out his own hands for her to see, and attempted to make her understand the bond that toil and peril create between men who have suffered together. But she, gazing at his rags and his disfigurement, could see in him only a man who had lowered himself to the level of those toilers he had picked up in hovels along shore; and the expression in her eyes told him exactly what she thought; and then he could only stammer his reasons for remaining loyal to his associates. One spark of sympathy and real understanding, if she had shown such, would have inspired him to eloquence. But he found only indifferent wonderment and increasing petulance in her pretty features. Adams stood beside her, and lighted a fresh cigar and cocked sardonic eyebrows.

"But what has all this nonsense to do with what father offers?" she demanded. "It isn't business—what you are talking."

"Ah, there you have it," cried Adams. "There's the girl! It isn't business."

"And, after all, one can't do a lot of foolish and quixotic things in this world and hope to succeed and make money," she said.

"Once you told me that you didn't like the money-mad sort of people," protested Thornton.

"Oh, money is simply all right in its place—it is only a part of happiness. But you are refusing to be sensible. You say you will not join in with my father—with us! What has come over you?"

"There's more to it than that, Leah," put in the father. "By keeping on with those fools, as he proposes, he will be fighting me—hurting my business. I've explained it to him."

"Then you will come in with us, won't you?" she pleaded.

"But I have been trying to tell you why I cannot—not now."

"It's merely being a business man—draw out of one partnership and go into another one," she said.

"I'm not boasting about myself—but if I draw out I shall leave helpless an old man and other men who are only children in their minds. I'd hate myself as a renegade forever after—I'd be ashamed to show my face on this coast."

"Oh, I don't know enough business to argue with you," she declared, pouting. "You can make more money with father than you can by fooling with that old wreck. Look what it has done to you! You positively make me shudder. And you did always look so nice in your uniform."

"Well, I feel better in these rags," he said, with bitterness. Her callousness had shocked him. "I'm not a hired man any longer."

"No, I'm not going to argue with you," she repeated. "I'm going to ask you to be sensible—for my sake."

"It's for your sake I want to make a man of myself—for your sake I have worked out there—and those men you ask me to desert have worked for your sake. I ask your pardon, Mr. Adams, for saying that to your daughter, without your permission, but this is a terrible moment in my life. I've got to talk plain."

The magnate did not reply. He was allowing his daughter to play this desirable fish without interfering.

The girl was encouraged to go a bit further by a glance her father gave her.

"Do you think more of an old bunch of scrap iron than you do of me?"

"This is torture!" he groaned. "I didn't think you could be as cruel as this."

"I want to save you from foolishness. I have heard men talk about

that wreck. They say it never can be raised. Lawrence, you shall not throw away this opportunity. It means—it means—so much." She stole a glance at her father, and her cheeks flushed.

"I'm a fair man," he put in. "There's no telling what may happen when we get everything straightened around."

"How can you ask anything more of father than what he has offered? I'll grant you have worked hard for my sake—I know your nature. But I can't allow you to fight my father."

Thornton gazed at her, choked and wrenched at his throat with his hand, as if trying to loosen an obstruction. He attempted to speak to her. He could not.

But his anger gave him words when he turned on Adams.

"I thought you had already done everything to me you could do. But I didn't know the resources of a—a scoun——"

"Be careful," advised Adams.

"Are you blaming my father for wanting to help you—make you something in the world?" asked the girl.

Thornton looked at them, shifting gaze from one to the other.

They had asked him to be a traitor, to give up his undertaking where he had shown the mettle of a man, to surrender his independence. The eyes of the girl, hard now, reflected the spirit of the father. Something went out of him at that moment, and he gasped at the realization that it had gone. He had not comprehended that something more sturdy and stable in the way of affection had been replacing his dream of love that Leah Adams had inspired. He started like a man suddenly awakened. He seemed to be looking into the frank eyes of Polly Candage, and to feel her honest handclasp in his.

And he had not understood till then!

He felt a sudden, queer shame.

What sort of a man was he? Had his heart been asleep during all those weeks when his brain had been so vitally awake?

"How do you dare to turn against my father, after what I have said to you—after what I have asked you to do?"

"I—I don't know," he stammered. "Something seems to be the matter with me all of a sudden. I don't just understand."

He realized fully the banality of that speech. He did not wonder at the indignation the girl displayed. He felt that he deserved it. Their romance was ending in a most unheroic fashion—and he had not even the tongue to tell of his distress.

He turned his gaze from hers, and saw his old cap on a table.

He picked it up, and hurried out of the room.

He was conscious of a distinct feeling of relief as he ran down the stairs.

"She wanted a lay figure in a captain's uniform," he muttered. "She didn't want a man."

Then his cheeks burned, and he wondered what *was* the matter with him. He found himself thinking of her, not as his inspiration and his hope, but as Marston Adams' daughter.

CHAPTER XVII.

A GIRL'S DEAR "BECAUSE!"

Thornton dodged off the main street, and sought the water front of Limeport by devious back ways.

Horrible depression and hopelessness succeeded the ardor that had come ashore with him from Razee. But when he reflected that, even if he went back to Razee with empty hands, he would go with clean hands, he felt strangely comforted in his despair.

As he passed an office where he had failed to enlist interest that day, he was called in by a banging on the dingy pane. It was a ship chandlery whose

proprietors occasionally took a hand in ventures.

"We've been talking this over since you left," stated the man who had summoned him. "Perhaps we didn't just understand your proposition. Did you mean to let us in as partners—give us a lay?"

"No, sir. I only asked for backing."

"That steamer, as she lies, is far from being real estate, Thornton. She has got to be floated, and after she has been floated you've got to move her across considerable sea before you can get to a dry dock. It's a gamble—we'll take a half lay—you and your friend divide the other half."

"It's no use to talk that to me. You are trying to buy faith, and devotion, and hope, and courage, and my self-respect."

"Hadn't realized that I was dickering for so much," returned the man dryly. "What's the matter with you—losing your mind?"

"I've had one offer to-day to sell my manhood. They were willing to pay a bigger price for it than you can offer. I refused."

The business man gave the flaming young wrecker a keen going over with his calculating stare.

"Good day!" he said significantly. He turned to his accounts.

Thornton went out, and proceeded down the long wharf. He was in no mood to explain or to argue. He had about given up trying to make these sleek landsmen understand.

Tug *Seba J. Ransom* was loafing beside the wharf, waiting for a job, and Captain Dodge, lolling in the sun across the pilot-house window sill, hailed his friend.

"The excursion season to Fools' Nubble is starting in again, now that the weather is warming up, Thornton."

The young man halted, and glowered down on the jocose captain.

"I reckon I'll run regular trips. I'll have a sign on the tug: 'This way to see Cap Thornton and his friends lift themselves by their boot straps. I'll make it a popular run, out to Fools' Nubble."

"Are you talking about our work at Razee?"

"Sure."

"I'm in no frame of mind to joke about that, Dodge."

"Might as well be—it's a joke. You'll never float that steamer."

"It's that kind of talk from men like you that has hurt me so much here in Limeport. They take your say-so because you have been out there; they won't come out to see for themselves. I have a good mind to jump down there, Dodge, and slap that cheap mouth of yours."

"Needn't bother about it—those fists, as I glimpse 'em from here, don't look as if they'd taste well. Better put salt on 'em—they're spoiling," joked the unterrified skipper. "And you'd better not do me up. You'd miss that excursion party, maybe, if I couldn't see to steer out there."

"What excursion party?"

"The one I'm here waiting for. I've been chartered for Razee."

"I serve notice on you that you can't land anybody on that wreck. That goes for you and for everybody who hails from Limeport."

"Do you hear that, mister?" inquired Captain Dodge, looking past the angry Thornton to some person who had come up behind him.

The young man snapped his head around, and came face to face with a stranger whose attire marked the city man, and who was looking at this wrathful and unkempt character with lively interest.

"Shake hands with Cap Thornton," invited Captain Dodge. "He's one of our most sociable young gents along shore."

"I hope your rule doesn't apply to me," said the stranger.

"It applies to everybody from now on."

"Will you take a little turn on the wharf with me? I want to talk to you till the rest of my party gets along."

Thornton accompanied him in sullen silence, and Captain Dodge looked hurt and disappointed because they did not begin to talk until they were so far away that he could not overhear.

"Our little excursion isn't a curiosity affair, Captain Thornton. My name is Burkett, and I promoted and was president of the Bee Line Transportation Company. As matters have turned out, I suppose you think we were pretty quick quitters."

"Yes, as matters have turned out."

"The thing seemed a hopeless wreck —our officers so reported, and we abandoned to the underwriters. And the underwriters didn't have any more courage than we had. You seemed to have the only grit that has been shown."

"Thank you." Thornton warmed only slowly, for he scented some attack in litigation from this former head of the Bee Line. The man's next words confirmed his suspicions.

"I'm waiting for our attorney and three of our directors to join me."

The young man's sour conclusion was that the world had combined against him and his helpless little band. They were jumping on him at a time when he was on his back.

"Well, go ahead and say your worst —they've all been saying it," he growled.

Burkett looked him over, and seemed somewhat disconcerted.

"I wasn't expecting this attitude on your part," he suggested.

"What did you expect—that I would give three cheers, and hand over what we have fought for all winter?"

Burkett halted.

"Hold on, Captain Thornton. I'll explain our attitude in this matter mighty quick. I see you misunderstand. We made a big mistake in letting go so easily. We simply got scared. But we're not going to whine. We don't put forward the least claim to the *Conomo*."

"That's the first square word I've had from an outsider."

"But under the circumstances, we hope you're going to consider us first in a trade. We want to reorganize and keep on in the business with the kind of a steamer we started with. We want to build more. Will you tell me how far along you have got in the work of salvage? I have heard only reports."

Thornton gave the information, and became positive in his declarations, for the interest shown by the other man cheered him.

"Then I'm going to make a proposition to you in a nutshell—the same to be elaborated and put in final form when our lawyers can get together," stated Burkett, after the young man had finished. "We'll use our present capital and coöperate with you in floating the steamer, repairing her in dry dock and refitting her for the route. We'll have her appraised as she stands after refitting, deduct cost of our efforts—actual money expended—and give you stock in the new company to represent the difference. Have you got faith in our line?"

"I certainly have. With a couple more steamers like the *Conomo*, we can handle the transportation business in freight along this coast."

"I'm glad to hear you say 'we,'" declared Burkett.

"It slipped out, but it means that I know a man's offer when I hear it," said Thornton. "I'll join that excursion party to Razee Reef, if you'll invite me, and I believe I can show you all you're hoping to see."

Mr. Burkett and his associates did see all that they hoped to see at Razee.

That the scanty crew with their paltry devices had been able to accomplish so much astonished and delighted them.

But the dreary days of makeshift were at an end.

The lighters of one of the biggest wrecking companies of the coast hurried to Razee and flocked around the maimed steamer—Samaritans of the sea. Gigantic equipment embraced her; great pumps gulped the water from her; bolstered and supported, as a stricken man limps with his arms across the shoulders of his friends, the steamer came off Razee Reef with the first spring tide in May, and toiled off across the sea in the wake of puffing tugs, and was shored up and safe at last in a dry dock—the hospital of the crippled giants of the ocean.

No music ever sounded as sweet to Captain Lawrence Thornton as that clanging chorus the hammers of the ironworkers played on the flanks of the *Conomo*. But he tore himself away from that music, and went down to Maquit along with a vastly contented Captain Candage who remembered now that he had a daughter waiting for him.

She had been apprised by letter of their success, and of their coming.

Maquit made a celebration of that arrival of the *Ethel and May*, and Dolph and Otie, cook and mate of the schooner, led the parade when the men were on shore.

They came back to their own with the full purses that the generosity of their employers had provided, and there was no longer any doubt as to the future of the men who once starved on Hue and Cry.

Lawrence Thornton had accepted the position of manager of the Bee Line—as a skipper who knew his business and had courage to back him—and he had declared that he knew where to find faithful workers when it came time to distribute jobs.

Polly Candage had come to him when he steped foot on shore, hands outstretched to him and eyes alight. And when she put her hands in his, he knew in his soul that this was the greeting he had been waiting for, her words of congratulation were the dearest of all, her smile was the best reward, and for her dear self he had been hungry. But he would not admit to himself that he had come to woo. He resolutely told himself that his attitude toward her must be that of a brother, a friend. Her eyes had always met his with that frankness that suggests only friendship.

When the soft May dusk had softened the harsh outlines of the little hamlet, and the others were busy with their own and had left Thornton and Polly to themselves, he sat with her on the porch of the widow's cottage, where they spent that first evening after they had been saved from the sea.

There had been a long silence between them.

"We have had no opportunity—I have not dared yet to tell you my best hopes for the dearest thing of all," she ventured.

"The one up inland—I know. I am glad for you."

"What one up inland?"

"That young man—the only young man in all the world."

"Oh, yes! I had forgotten."

He stared at her.

"Forgotten?"

"Why—why—I don't exactly mean forgotten. But I was not thinking about him when I spoke. I mean that now—with your new prospects—you can go to—to—you can speak to Mr. Adams, now!"

"I have spoken to Mr. Adams—quite lately. He has spoken to me," he said, his face hard. "We shall never speak to each other again, if I can have my way."

He met her astonished gaze.

"Polly, I hate to trouble you with my poor affairs of this kind. You have a dear affection of your own to cherish, and I have no business lamenting to you. But this is hardly a lament, after all. I can talk of business to Mr. Burkett, and of the sea to your father. But there's another matter that I can't mention to anybody—except you will listen. I will tell you where I saw Mr. Adams—and his daughter."

He told the story, and she listened, her lips apart.

"So you see," he said at the end, "it was worse than a dream—it was a mistake. It couldn't have been real love, for it was not built on the right foundation. I have never had much experience with girls—I have been swashing about at sea most all my life. Perhaps I don't know what real love is. But it seems to me it must be built up on mutual understanding, willingness to sacrifice for each other."

"I think so," returned Polly softly.

"I want to see that young man of yours, up inland. I want to tell him that he is mighty lucky because he met you first and won your love."

"Why?"

"I can't tell you just why—it isn't right for me to do so."

"But a girl likes to hear such things. Please!"

"Will you forgive me for saying what I shouldn't say?"

"I will forgive you."

"He's lucky, because if I didn't know you were promised and in love, I'd go down at your feet and beg you to marry me. You're the wife for a Yankee sailor, Polly Candage. If only there were two of you in this world, we'd have a double wedding."

He leaped up and started away.

"Where are you going?" she asked, and there was almost a wail in her tones. "No, he does not understand girls well," she told herself bitterly.

"I am going down to Rowley's store to see if he will take his money back and let us save interest. He told me I'd have to keep the money for a year."

She called to him falteringly, but with such appeal in her tones that he halted and stared at her.

"Couldn't you—isn't it just as well to let the matter rest until—till——"

"Oh, there's no time like the present in money matters," he declared, with a laugh, wholly oblivious, not in the least understanding her embarrassment—her piteous effort to bar her little temple of love's sacrifice so that he could not trample in just then.

His laugh was a forced one. He realized that if he did not hurry away from this girl, he would be reaching out his arms to her, declaring the love that surged in him, now that he had awakened to full consciousness of that love; his Yankee reticence, his instincts of honor between men, were fighting hard against his passion; he told himself that he would not betray a man he did not know, nor proffer love to a girl who, so he believed, loved another.

"May I not go with you?" she pleaded, restraining her wild impulse to run ahead of him and warn the deacon.

"Of course!" he consented, and they walked down the street, neither daring to speak.

They found Rowley alone in his store. He was puttering around, making ready to close the place for the night.

As they entered, the girl stepped behind Thornton, and, catching the deacon's eye, made frantic gestures. In the half gloom, those gestures were decidedly incomprehensible; the deacon lowered his spectacles and stared at her, trying to understand this wigwagging.

"I'd like to take up that loan and save the rest of the year's interest,

Deacon Rowley," stated Thornton, with sailorly bluntness.

The girl was trying to convey to the deacon the fact that he must not reveal her secret. She was shaking her head. This seemed to the intermediary like direct and conclusive orders from the principal.

"No, sir, Captain Thornton! It can't be done."

"I don't call that a square deal between men—no matter what straight business may be."

Polly now signaled eager assent, meaning to make the deacon understand that he must take the money. But the deacon did not understand—he thought the girl affirmed her desire for straight business.

"You took it for a year—no back tracks, captain."

She shook her head violently.

"No, sir! Keep it, as you agreed, and pay your interest."

"Deacon Rowley, you're an old idiot!" blazed the girl.

When the deacon yanked off his spectacles, and Captain Thornton turned amazed eyes to her, she put her hands to her face and ran out of the store, sobbing. She was only a girl! She had no more resources left with which to meet that situation in men's affairs.

Thornton's impulse was to follow, but the deacon checked him.

"I ain't going to be made a fool of no longer in this—even to make three hundred dollars," he rasped.

"A fool! What do you mean?"

"You go settle it with her."

"What has Polly Candage got to do with this business?"

"It's her money."

"You mean to say——"

"She drawed her money out of the bank—and hornswoggled me into lying for her. What won't a girl do when she's in love with a fellow? If you ain't knowed it before, it's high time you did know it!"

That last remark of the deacon's had disgusted reference only to the matter of the money.

But it conveyed something else to Captain Lawrence Thornton.

He ran out of the store!

Far up the road he overtook her. She was hurrying home. When she faced him, he saw tears on her cheeks, though the generous gloom of evening wrapped them where they stood. He took both her hands.

"Polly Candage, why did you risk your money on me?" he demanded.

"I knew you would succeed!" she murmured, turning her face away. "It was an—a good investment."

"When you gave it, did you—were you thinking—was it only for an investment, Polly?"

She did not reply.

"Look here! This last thing ought to tie my tongue—for I owe everything to you. But my tongue won't stay tied—not now, Polly. I don't care if there is somebody else up country—I ought to care—I ought to respect your——"

She pulled a hand free and put plump fingers on his lips.

"There is nobody up country—there never has been anybody, Lawrence," she whispered.

He took her in his arms, and kissed her, and held her close.

"Will you tell me one thing, now? I know the answer, sweetheart mine, but I want to hear you say it. Why did you give me all your money?"

She put her palms against his cheeks and spoke the words his soul was hungry for:

"Because I love you!"

Bertrand W. Sinclair is the author of the complete novel which will appear in the first June POPULAR. It is called "A Ton of Gold."

The Southpaw Meteor

By George Pattullo

Author of "The Sheriff of Badger," "Jack of Hearts," Etc.

We have had a number of strong Western stories from Pattullo. Now comes a baseball story from the author of "The Sheriff of Badger"—his first baseball story, but we hope not his last. It is as strong in its way as any of his Western yarns. Don't miss meeting the Meteor—"a massive individual with hands, and a shock of hair sticking out under a cap three sizes too small." "Where did they get it?" asked the stands.

FENNER McGRADY, manager and second baseman of the Benton Boosters, Class D, the peerless nine of Bill Green County, was tearing his hair. By the nine gods he swore that he would brook no more such delinquencies—it was the last time any one could smear it on him, were Fenner's words. For Hi Post, the doughty Hi, was laid by the heels.

The teacher in grade four of the high school had been the first to discover the pitcher's plight. He lodged in the next room at Miss Sally Jo Gober's boarding house, and precisely at two of the clock he sped hotfoot to the square in search of some one in authority.

"Mr. Post," he reported, somewhat out of breath, "is lying on his bed oblivious to surroundings, Mr. McGrady. Does not the game start at four?"

The manager stared until his eyes smarted.

"Oblivious to what?" he rasped.

"To surroundings."

"Say," said McGrady, in forced patience, "what the Sam Hill are you driving at, anyhow? Trying to kid me? What's the matter with the big slob?"

Upon which the teacher progressed to modern parlance.

"I am afraid he's—soused."

Indeed Hi was soused. No amount of shaking, no intensity of wrathful whispering could extract more than a grunt from him; then a rubbing of the eyes and a rumbling request to turn him loose and leave him be. Nor did tearful reminders of the duty he owed to the Boosters, of the desperate case in which he was putting his teammates, and of the shame and rage of his native town produce any other effect on Mr. Post than a sneer shortened by sleepiness, and certain vague references to "roughnecks" and "cotton pickers." As Hi had once worked an entire summer at carpentering in Hartford, Connecticut, it was suspected that he was making mock of the citizenry.

"All right," announced the manager, abandoning first-aid-to-the-drowning tactics, "suit yourself. But remember this, Hi Post—there ain't no use you coming to me for that fourteen dollars, 'cause you won't get it."

He went out to take counsel of the team on the courthouse square.

"This," Fenner wailed, "is what comes of a seven-hundred-a-month salary list. What can you expect with only two pitchers? One's just naturally bound to be sick all the time. And the other goes to work, and gets pickled on

you. Well, I reckon we're up against it. Yes, sir; the only thing to do is to call the game off."

And he searched their faces in pathetic questioning. A terrible silence ensued. Each Booster felt the tragedy of the situation, and gave a hitch to his trousers, chewing his tobacco more thoughtfully.

"Yes," said Fenner again, now hopeless, "I reckon that's what we'll have to do."

It was plain that he waited desperately for some one to contradict him.

"There's just got to be a game," put in the first baseman. "Why, we've got an advance sale of ninety dollars, Fenner. And it's likely the stand'll be packed. Maybe they'll be able to come across with our pay, too. No, sir, we can't disappoint the crowd, Fenner."

The manager kicked viciously at a hitching ring in the sidewalk, and he made reply in bitterness of spirit: "Sure we can't! It's mighty easy to talk, Kizzy, but who's going to fling? Hey? You can't have a ball game without a flinger. Consarn his eyes—the big stiff, after all I've done for him—I always did say Post had a yellow streak a yard wide, and now look! Just when we needed him most, too! This Wild Cat bunch'll go through us like—like—they won't even hesitate."

Business of glaring savagely at the red dirt of the square while a small group of spectators swelled to a crowd. Each man asked as he arrived, "What's the matter?" received the answer, "No game;" and ejaculated, "The devil you say." Then he waited in respectful quiet for the result of the Boosters' cogitations, fearful lest untimely or loose talk from laymen divert professional acumen.

Out on the square, a large youth with hands was placidly engaged in chunking stones at a tin can, to the keen admiration of a score of small boys. The reverberations of his hits came quickly and evenly. At last they drew the attention of the ball players.

"Look at that boob throw, will you?" one exclaimed.

The manager roused from a brown study, and scrutinized the boob in question.

"Gee, he's got a paw like a ham," said McGrady, in critical admiration. "Ain't the feller built up, though?"

They all watched the ungainly giant in cotton shirt and blue overalls drive the can along the ground by a rapid succession of throws. Then Kizzy remarked in a tone of mild surprise: "Why, I know that guy. Sure I do. He comes from a li'l' wide place in the road about six miles south of here. Sure—that's him—that's ol' Lefty Burger. He used to hang round the store at Telephone, ol' Lefty did, and fan 'em one, two, three, when we choosed up sides."

Fenner inquired with frightful gravity: "Can he pitch?"

"Who? Him? Lefty pitch? Naw, he don't know what the word means. Lefty can't pitch. But he can strike 'em out, Fenner—just burns 'em over with that long left swing of his'n."

The manager swallowed hard, and turned resolutely on his faithful band.

"You-all," he ordered, "come across with me. And stick right close. We've got to rustle a pitcher, so we'll try this boob. Maybe he can't strike them Wild Cats out, but he sure enough can bean 'em. Come on. And listen—if he won't hark to reason, we'll take him along anyhow. Do you hear? Kizzy, you know the feller, so you do the spouting."

At four o'clock Russell Park was filled with a seething crowd of nine hundred paid admissions. The grand stand whined and groaned under its load so persistently that Miss Marylee Schoonover got an attack of nerves and went home. Les Stevenson rented out his cushions at a nickel each to the last

knotty one; the bleachers were hipping and elbowing one another as they yowled: "Oh, you Boosters," "You've got everything. kid, you've got everything," "Hit it on the nose, Spike"; and there were four nice little fights. Also, sundry gentlemen of one hundred lung power hunched on the side lines, to the end that they might aid and steel the umpire in crises.

Yet there was disquietude amid the general jubilation. It found expression in an apprehensive buzz, in low-voiced queries, and important consultations through the grand-stand screen with the players, lolling in the shade of the projecting roof. For rumor ran that Hi Post would not be in the game; he was sick; he was drunk; his sister was married. Whatever reasons were assigned, all agreed that Hi's puissant right arm would not flay the air for Benton that day, and gloom hung heavy. The Wild Cats were a tough bunch, and a single point only separated them from the league leaders. It surely looked as if the Boosters would provide the point.

"What can you expect?" inquired Murray Henderson, in a white heat of loyalty. "If the town won't support a team, what can you expect? A salary list of seven hundred per—two pitchers! Post never was any good, anyway—the big dub. Now we're without a flinger. Say, Jack, what'll we do? I don't see anybody warming up?"

"They've got a gink," answered Jack Russell, "back of the stand. Maybe he's warming up. What he was doing didn't look that way to me, but maybe he is. Anyhow, he's throwing the ball, and sweating behind the ears."

Those near listened attentively to this dialogue, for the two were steeped in baseball lore and spoke with the tongue of authority. The news was passed around, and the grand stand emitted a grunt of disgust, sat back against its neighbors' feet and resigned itself to the worst. Old Mr. Rainey, who could never bear to see the home team lose, picked up his cushion and meandered off, to mourn an entire night over the precipitate downward rushing of the American nation.

At four-fifteen, a fat person in a blue suit and blue cap confronted the stand.

"Ladies—an' gen'l'men," he bellowed, with a masterly gradation from tender respect to insolence, "Batteries 'day are—Wild Cats, humpty umph humph and Casey Benton"—in a hoarse aside: "Who the plague's flinging for you, Fenner?"—For Benton, Burger and Umpitty humph uh. Play ball."

The Boosters ran on to the field in approved fashion, with one exception, and, of course, the crowd whooped. The exception was a massive individual with hands, and a shock of hair sticking out under a cap three sizes too small. On him were focused eighteen hundred eyes. At him were directed nine hundred queries: "Where did they find it?"

"Pipe the feet, Marylou," shrilled a lady in the front row.

"My, ain't he handsome?" Marylou giggled. "Looks like he smelled something and couldn't locate it."

The gentleman thus seemingly suspicious of the proximity of an odor was none other than Lefty Burger, clad in a dirty gray uniform, and most heartily ashamed of himself. He slouched toward the box, stumbling once on the way, and his soul was sick within him. For never before had Lefty heard such human clamor; never had he visioned such surging hordes. The largest crowd on which his gaze had ever rested was a bunch of fifty-two cotton pickers.

"Don't mind what they say, kid," counseled the umpire kindly, as he handed Burger a ball. "You just keep your eye on the catcher, and the bases."

Lefty smiled a ghastly smile and gulped: "All right."

In point of fact, he did not hear what was yelled at him. All noises merged into a dull roar in his ears, stand and

bleachers were a blur to his eyes. The plate and the batter, however, were outlined with horrid distinctness.

"Stri-i-ike one," he heard the umpire jerk out, as from a vast distance.

"Stri-i-ike tuh"—after the catcher had signaled for a ball. And Lefty began to feel at ease, with a sense that the day was his.

Why recite what has become history? Why audaciously limn with pale words events that will go ringing down the corridors of time as long as there are corridors and almanacs—epochal events over which Bentonites swell and sniff with pride and ecstasy.

Lefty flung the ball. That tells the whole story. He stood with his hands at his sides, heedless alike of abuse and encouragement; eyed the catcher steadily for a signal, nodded his head; and with no preliminaries, without a single contortion or one writhing movement, shot the ball by a sloping motion of the left wrist. And the spheroid whizzed over the plate with the speed of a bullet, now cutting the inside corner, now grazing the outer. When about a yard from the batter, the ball gave a hop that made the veteran Gander's eyes pop, and he started to rave in the meaningless monologue that was wont to serve him as a safety valve in moments of overpowering tension:

"You're workin' good, kid. You're workin' good, big feller. Burn 'em over. Wow—did you see the ol' boy?"

But stand and bleachers rocked and roared with laughter, for here was a lout with a drooping shoulder—dragging a bag filled with ninety pounds of cotton around a forty-acre field tends to sag the frame—standing erect on the mound, visibly nervous, his cap perched grotesquely atop a mop of brown hair, flinging the ball at terrific speed without effort or change of position—and striking out the heavy hitters of the dreaded Wild Cats.

"Har, har!" exploded a nigger from the side lines. "Why don't he wind up?"

The umpire asked the same question in a husky aside:

"Say, kiddo, where's your wind-up?"

"Uh, uh," Lefty grunted, with a shrewd look. "If I took time to wind up, the squirrel'd get away. I done learned to pitch chunkin' rocks at squirrels."

To the batters who reached first, Lefty paid not the slightest heed. His sole aim appeared to be to fan every man up. If he could not do that, let the infield take care of them. As a result, three stole second; two pilfered third; and, amid the delirium of the nine hundred, one man sneaked home the while Lefty, in a misguided moment, essayed a wind-up. So disgusted was the southpaw over this outcome of the umpire's advice, that he threw his glove to the earth, squatted on the mound, and nursed his knees. Whereupon another player promptly bolted to third. Apprised by the execrations of the Bentonites that something was amiss, Lefty arose and resumed his job.

His orders were brief and reasonably clear.

"If you can't strike 'em out," Fenner told him, "if they get to you, bean two or three maybe. You can't really hurt them Wild Cats. Just bean 'em, and they'll scare."

Accordingly, in the third inning, when two men had found his curves, the new southpaw sent a hot straight ball into the next batter's ribs. The man got on the base, but somebody was obliged to run for him. Again, in the fifth, he hurled them so close that the Wild Cats protested, and the umpire warned Lefty, after he had grazed a batter's head.

"You're fixing to bean that guy. Don't try to tell me," declared the umpire. "You cut it out, or I'll can you."

However, the result of these tactics was that the Wild Cats became nervous. They feared to face Burger's terrific

inshoots; they stood back from the plate and swung supinely. He struck out fourteen men, and the Boosters won by a score of twenty-two to seventeen.

As Gander was stripping after the game, there drifted to him a man in a gray-checked suit, who sat down on a bench, and remarked affably: "Howdy, Gander, old hoss."

The catcher surveyed him with considerable suspicion.

"You don't remember me?"

"No. I don't. But your manner's mighty familiar."

The stranger laughed, revealing several gold-crowned teeth.

"Why, I gave you a trial way back in nineteen-seven, Gander. Have you cut it out yet?"

On hearing this, the veteran folded his shirt carefully on top of his pad, and placed one shoe beside the other with nice precision.

"I'm not askin' you for any job, Cassidy," he said. "Still scoutin' for the Browns?"

"No-oo. I'm spying for the White Sox. Say, Gander, about this kid who flung to-day—what?"

"First time he ever pitched in a game with nine men on each side," rejoined Gander.

"Sure. I know. Any one could tell that." He leaned back, shaking with noiseless laughter. "But somehow I've got a hunch. He's got a world of speed, Gander, ain't he? And he looks as if he'd learn. Yes, sir, he looks like the goods. What do you think, old hoss? A few years farmed out now——"

"Cassidy," replied the catcher impressively, "you give me a chance once, and I ain't got any hard feelings because I fell down on it. So let me hand you a tip—hot off the bat. This big boob will make a world beater. I can't hold him right now."

And with that, the luckless Gander went on about his business, while the scout repaired to a telegraph office.

Somebody reported to the sobered Post the triumph of the afternoon.

"Yes," sneered that erratic luminary. "He's a wonder, he is. Burger'll be back picking cotton inside a year."

From the remote edge of the listening circle, Lefty spoke up—not boastfully or in resentment, but soberly as a seer: "You'll be paying your good money one of these days to see me pitch, Post."

The Boosters tried him in two more games, and he lost both. His strike-out average was twelve for each game, but Lefty wanted to do all the work, and relied so little on his support that it failed him in pinches. Nevertheless, he was learning.

"You're goin' strong, Lefty," Gander informed him. "But don't use up all you've got. Let the others do something. You ain't iron. Take care of your wing."

His fourth game he won with ease. Then some fiend in human form advised him to get a hair cut, and he came on the field with his head smooth and knobby, self-conscious as a boy in his first pair of long trousers. His work was pitiful. Samson shorn of his locks was not so impotent. Lefty could do absolutely nothing with the ball.

"Take him out! Take him out!" yelled Jack Russell. "I knew somebody'd crab the game like this. I'll bet a girl did it. What did he want a hair cut for? We hire him to pitch—not to look beautiful."

They jerked Lefty from the box, and for an entire fortnight he cooled his heels on the bench to give his hair a chance to grow. The discipline affected his nerves. Burger became morose and fretful, and one night when Fenner reproved him for indulgence in cigarettes, he secured a bottle of bootleggers' whisky and drank himself into a condition of gentle melancholy. During the process he had a few remarks to offer on the subject of baseball, with special reference to pitching.

"There ain't a man in the world," Lefty announced—Mr. Burger was not overweighted with modesty—"There ain't a man in the world I cain't fan when I'm right. No, sir; nobody can hit me when I'm goin' strong."

His companions maintained a discreet silence.

"No; wait," continued Lefty, as though an idea had just struck athwart his muddled brain. "I'm wrong. There is one. Yes, sir. He's a li'l' guy who lives about four miles from home—Shorty, his name is—Shorty Steen. Shorty can hit me. I'll admit that. Shorty can hit me. That li'l' runt has got something on me. It don't seem like I can pitch good to Shorty a-tall."

Next morning he was very rueful.

"I ain't never going to touch booze again," he told Gander, with the obstinate upturn of the nose that the catcher had learned to read.

"Good!" cried the victim of John Barleycorn, convinced that Burger would stick to his resolution.

That same afternoon the manager routed Lefty out of a game of forty-two in the City Drug Store.

"Got some news," he said, with suppressed excitement, when they were outside. "Now, don't faint or nothing. Feeling strong enough? Well, I've sold you to the White Sox. Now, keep cool. They aim to farm you out to Fort Worth, or one of the Texas League teams, for a couple of seasons first."

The news ran through Benton like fire through prairie grass. Nothing else was talked of for days; Lefty was the idol of the hour. And when he departed to finish the season with a Texas League team, a band accompanied him to the station, the mayor made a farewell address, and the president of the County National loaned him twenty-five dollars, and said he was proud to do it.

After that we heard of him in blinding flashes. The *Daily Booster* proudly dubbed him Our Southpaw Meteor. Then the season ended, and he dropped abruptly from our ken.

"Say," observed a shoe drummer one day at the Alamo Hotel. "Do you mind that big slob who used to pitch for you-all, and was sold to Chicago? Well, he's a-slinging hash at a railway restaurant over in the Territory—honest, he is."

Nobody believed him, but it was true. Lefty had had a dispute with his manager, and was released temporarily in the way of discipline; but when the season opened, the name of Lefty Burger appeared in the roster of likely recruits in all the Chicago papers, and we knew that the country was safe.

Shortly after he had reported, they gave Lefty a trial in a game against Detroit. There were some thirty thousand ardent fans present to see.

Came to bat a jaunty, alert player whose advent was the occasion for considerable commotion. Apprehending that this must have some significance, Lefty stepped out of the box to confer with the catcher.

"Say," he queried. "Who is this li'l' guy, anyhow?"

"That's Ty Cobb."

"Can he hit?" Lefty asked out of the side of his mouth.

The catcher stared hard at him, and then admitted that Mr. Cobb's batting average was fair. Wholly untroubled by this intelligence, Lefty stepped back to the mound, smoothed the dirt to his liking, wound up in fearful fashion, and struck Ty out with five pitched balls.

Never shall I forget when the bulletin came into the *Booster* office. We just put our faces in our hands, and wept from sheer joy and thankfulness. The mayor gave the schools a half holiday.

After that début we heard of him fitfully throughout the season; now he was put in during the seventh to stay a rush of the hard-hitting Athletics;

again, he pitched a no-hit game; next time, the Boston aggregation hammered him to all parts of the field.

And then came the climax. In an eleven-inning battle, Lefty drove a three-bagger with two men on bases, while twenty thousand people raved to an echoing sky. Is it any wonder that Benton sobered in its hysterical worship, and spoke his name with gravity as its greatest citizen?

Murray Henderson returned from a trip North.

"Ran across the White Sox manager," he reported, striving to be calm, "and he tells me he wouldn't take twenty thousand dollars for ol' Lefty."

"Gee," we said with bated breath, for we had parted with the Meteor for a hundred.

The season ended in a blaze of fireworks for Lefty. Sporting writers talked glibly every day of his doings, and the condition of his priceless left wing. More readers turned to the pert biographical sketches of him, and the cartoonists' caricatures of him in action than bothered to wade through data from the White House on the activities of a milch cow.

Then one day a boy dashed madly from the *Booster* office, waving a telegram, and shrieking at the top of his lungs:

"Lefty's a-comin'. Ol' Lefty's comin' home."

On confirmation of the bulletin, the mayor called a meeting of the council, and a public holiday was declared for his home-coming. All the merchants agreed to close their shops, and every one else was perfectly willing to knock off watching sewer construction to do the Meteor honor. Also, the Boosters opened negotiations with the Wild Cats, and an exhibition game was arranged.

Benton's population is four thousand souls. About seven thousand gathered at the Katy station to see Lefty step off the train. A band humph-ah-humphed. Somebody made a speech. The train drew in, and seven thousand groans of disappointment were wrung from the crowd when nobody but Ham Lee, the express agent, hopped down.

Sadly the throngs dispersed. Yet there was an inexplicable excitement in the air, an electrical tension presaging important happenings. For Jack Russell and the manager of the Boosters had not been among those present at the station, it was sagely pointed out—they had been seen driving around the square in an automobile—of course, that was it. The two had met the Meteor down the line; he was to be smuggled into town to make his first bow in a Booster uniform. For Lefty was to pitch against the Wild Cats.

As long as Memory endures, while Reason holds her Throne—these are excerpts from the banqueting speech of Gus Spivy—anyway, not one who saw the game will ever forget it. People fought for admittance. The perspiring gatemen reported three thousand paid admissions, and the stand was so taxed that scores of timid ones forsook it to squat on the grass back of third base.

And they all waited for Lefty. It was for him they had come. The Wild Cats and the Boosters romped about, knocking out flies, gathering hot grounders, while the crowds eyed them impatiently. Where was the Meteor? Where was Benton's greatest son?

"He's out behind the stand, warming up," Murray Henderson whispered to a friend.

It came five minutes to four. The players trooped in from practice. Catcalls, jeers, and interrogations slowly subsided. A strained quiet settled over the thousands—it was as though the whole round world held its breath for his coming.

Then a tall figure in a dirty gray uniform emerged from a door under the stand into full view—and "pantomime

broke loose," as Bill Hamilton used to say. Strong men wept, women fainted, the cops were powerless.

"I seen him get his first hair cut. Yes, sir," croaked Jim Parker brokenly.

Miss Mary Lou Terry cried softly into her handkerchief.

"He used to board right next door to us," she sniffled. "Oh, only to think —often and often he's said 'Hello' to me."

It was Lefty, without a doubt, but a transformed Lefty. The droop was gone from his shoulder; he was lithe, alert, and cool. Close-cropped, cleanly shaved—none could have recognized in him the gawky yokel of a year before. And as he tilted the peak of his cap in acknowledgment of the roars of welcome, he wore an abashed, unspoiled, boyish grin.

The umpire called the game, feeling, as he did so, about as important as a two-spot in a new deck. And the Meteor went in to pitch.

It was magnificent. There was no bravado about his work, no hint of contempt for his adversaries. He pitched painstakingly, with the care and close attention to signals he would have employed against the cracks of the big league. One by one they faced him—one by one they went back to the bench amid the hoots of jubilant Benton. The Meteor was in fine fettle; he held the Wild Cats in the hollow of his hand.

"Say, Mr. Burger," suggested Fenner with much respect, at the end of the eighth. "What do you say to letting up a mite? None of them fellers have got to first yet. And the crowd'd like to see more action."

"All right," Lefty agreed cheerfully. "Only don't blame me if we blow up. Whenever a team lets down, something happens."

The manager protested: "Shucks, no. What could happen with you in there? We're two runs to the good. Pass one of 'em and give another a hit. You can throw 'em out."

Accordingly, with the score two to nothing, the Meteor put an easy one in the groove, and the first Wild Cat up hit for two bases. The crowd rubbed its eyes unbelievingly.

"Pshaw, them accidents will happen to anybody," they said.

Next, Lefty served up four balls. There were now two men on, and a conference took place among the Wild Cats. Shortly the umpire faced the stand and made an announcement, while a squat player with excessively bowed legs was selecting a bat. The squat one swaggered to the plate, tapped his heels with the ash, gave a jerk to his cap, spat, and leered at the Meteor.

Lefty was peering at him intently. He motioned to the catcher, who stepped out.

"Say," asked the Meteor, with some anxiety, "who is this half portion?"

"A gink named Steen," Gander returned. "Can't hit a balloon."

"Given name ain't Shorty, by any chance?" continued Lefty.

"That's what they call him. Come on, big feller. Fling him three, and let's go home."

The Meteor returned to the mound with so perturbed a countenance that the umpire was moved to wonder.

"Anything wrong, Burger?" he inquired solicitously. "You ain't sick or nothing? A touch of sun maybe?"

In his anxiety the Meteor relapsed into the dialect of his boyhood.

"No-oo"—his worry was plain as he pawed the ground with his toe. "It's this guy at bat. That li'l' runt is just as like as not to knock the cover off'n the ball."

"Pshaw!" the umpire ejaculated scornfully. "In seven times up, Steen ain't even had a scratch."

"Maybe," answered Lefty, "but I bet he wallops me. There's only one man

in the world I'm scared of, ump—and it's that li'l' runt there. Well, here goes."

The leer was still on Shorty's face. He stood close up to the plate, gripped the bat tightly, and taunted the Meteor.

"Come on, you big rube," said Mr. Steen. "Shoot one across. You cain't scare me—I never seen the day I couldn't lose you. Don't be nervous. Hand me one."

Lefty swung his arm, wound up, and did as requested. It flashed like a streak of light, with a break in it close to the batter that looked to be a yard wide; but the miserable half portion aforementioned did not quail. Not three men in the world could have hit it; scarcely a dozen would have tried. But a sound resembling a whoop escaped Shorty. He stepped forward, flayed with all his strength, and grunted. The impact broke three thousand hearts. What the Steen person did to that ball is a shame. They haven't found it yet.

Away went Shortly, jogging comfortably around the bases while two men raced in ahead of him. As he trotted, he found pleasure in tossing insulting epithets at the Boosters' pitcher. His laugh was rude and annoying.

And what of the Southpaw Meteor, he of the twenty-thousand-dollar arm and world fame? What of the greatest find of the year in baseball, Benton's solace when the cotton crop failed? This: he stuck his huge hands on his hips, and watched Shorty make the circuit. He turned on the umpire a silly smile. Then in utter disgust the Meteor hurled his glove to the earth, sat down on the mound, and nursed his knees. All Benton sank back and howled.

Several players were speeding homeward in an automobile after the game when a tired and sweaty individual in a blue cotton shirt and overalls shouted at them from a field of cotton. He had a bag slung from his back and was woefully weary.

"Say, you fellers—how did the game come out?"

Lefty heard and said quickly to the driver: "Hey, stop a minute."

Then he stood up in the machine and yelled: "They done beat us. How're things?"

For some reason the cotton picker seemed to resent both the answer and the question that capped it.

It was Post, whom the Meteor had succeeded, back again in the cotton field.

He stared for a minute at the Meteor, then bent down to his picking.

"Aw, shut up!" was all he said.

We are hoping to get some more baseball yarns from Pattullo. When he sent us this one he said it was his "first fling on the diamond, and probably his last." We want more—don't you?

Fate Plays Some Massé Shots

By Frank Biighton

Blazing a new trail to the pot of gold via the billiard table. A cocksure business man discovers that billiards and business are a lot alike. Action is equal to reaction. If you shoot a billiard ball against a cushion at a certain angle it will leave the cushion at that angle. Same thing with business. The cocksure gentleman had the angles figured out to a nicety. But Fate played a massé shot.

VIC MASTERS sat enviously watching J. Huntington Havens as he lovingly stripped bill after bill of various denominations through his fingers.

"How do you do it, Hippopotamus?" he covetously queried.

The overly large man at the desk, whose flesh rolled down over his collar, and whose chair creaked under the strain of his massive form, smiled knowingly.

"By adhering strictly to the legalities while I shoot the moralities full of holes," he enigmatically replied, folding the last hundred-dollar bill over the plethoric wad and thrusting it into his capacious trousers pocket. "Come out and have a bite of lunch, Vic."

"Thanks," hastily returned the other man, with a warmth whose fervor was heightened at the thought of a meal. From Masters' present perspective, having eaten no breakfast, a lunch was not to be despised.

"You see," benignantly went on Havens, when they were seated in a cozy café, "I got hep to myself about a year ago. I knew that fake stock exchange in Philadelphia would blow up sooner or later, and I wiggled along before the wrath of the law dynamited the good things you fellows had on the Consolidated."

"Yes," tentatively replied Masters. "I thought you were a boob for selling your seat, Hippo, but it looks as if you could read the future."

He sighed heavily, thinking of the chain of bucket shops that once clothed him in purple and fine linen, but which existed now only in a memory.

"You're right," said Havens. "I read the future. I saw what was coming, and didn't wait for the avalanche to cover up little Eva. Well, I came to New York, and have been doing fairly well—thank you!"

He tossed off his cocktail, and grinned at his companion with the air of one at peace with the world. His obese personality contrasted strongly with the worried look of the not-too-well-fed Masters.

"But how are you getting away with it—what's the game?" whined the former bucket-shop man. "There's nothing on your door except the sign: 'J. Huntington Havens, Banker and Broker.'"

J. Huntington Havens clamped his face firmly together, as if he would lock in the words which rose to his lips. Then he smiled—a bland, patron-

izing smile. His eager-eyed luncheon companion studied him with an avidity that belied his effort to jest.

Vic Masters knew that the man opposite him was devoid of any compunction where an easy dollar was concerned. In the good old days, before the stern arm of the law had stripped the pseudo stock exchange in the Quaker City of its last semblance of respectability, they had often mingled on terms of intimacy, aiding one another to "put over a deal" to their mutual profit.

But the good days had gone. The big corner of "The Bourse" no longer resounded with the frantic cries of brokers in wash sales. Times had changed, and "pickings" were few and far between for the two hundred odd "members." Of all whom Vic Masters had any knowledge, "Hippopotamus" Havens was alone enjoying any apparently uninterrupted tide of prosperity.

"The trouble with all of you fellows," pompously continued Havens, "is that you lack imagination and initiative. You see a man making money with a bucket shop, and you open up one. You see a clique putting over a fake copper mine, keeping the quotations up with wash sales, and you try to declare yourselves in. You never originate, you never blaze a new trail to the pot of gold. You are idiotic imitators. Now, if you had any constructive qualities of mind——"

"Say!" snarled Masters; "do you think you're Henry Clews, writing a financial letter for a country weekly? You talk like Coin's financial school, Hippo. Come out of the language bushes and give a fellow a tip, won't you? I need it. And I've got a right to ask for it, because I staked you to a couple of hundred when you drifted into Philly, looking for the Salvation Army lunch counter, didn't I?"

Hippo laughed. The rumble seemed to start from his big feet, and it was a long time before it emerged from the orifice toward which he was piloting a Rockaway oyster.

"You sure did give me a hand-up, Vic," he admitted, "but I paid it, didn't I?"

Masters growled an assent.

"As for staking you, I'll slip you a hundred right now, if you're broke. But as for my business, that's a matter I won't discuss with any one, except as to the philosophy behind it. Business, Vic, is a game where a good many people start and a few cross the finish line. Business, as you and I have played it, was always a tricky proposition, and sometimes a dangerous one. I have evolved a new method—one just like a game of billiards. Billiards and business, I've found, are a lot alike. Action is equal to reaction. If you shoot a billiard ball against a cushion at a certain angle, it will leave the cushion at that angle, barring English. I've got the angles figured to a new game of business—and I'm running up a high score—that's all."

"Billiards, eh!" laughed Masters viciously. "Sure, action is equal to reaction. But look out, old kid, that you don't get up against some one who can pull off a massé shot. You savvy the massé shot, Hippo? Looks like an impossibility—there ain't no such animal, eh? But once in a while a fellow chalks his cue and hits that ball with a twist and it begins to roll back. The next thing you know, without any reason at all, and making action and reaction look sick, the ball rolls ahead and around in a curve and does the thing you don't expect."

Havens nodded. "I get you, Vic. But the ginks I play with are amateurs—they don't know there's such a thing as a massé shot in the game of business. I guess I'll beat it back to the office now and keep going. Here's that hundred. Wish you luck. Can't

stop—didn't know it was so late, and I've got an appointment."

He stripped off a century note, tossed the waiter a second bill for the check, and left abruptly.

Vic Masters dallied on with the luncheon, thinking hard. The caress of the hundred in his pocket was very comforting, but he could not still a pang of exasperation while wishing he had some inkling of how Hippo was "cleaning up," while other and more clever men were sleeping in the park.

II.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," announced the stenographer, when J. Huntington Havens reëntered his private office through the private door.

"Who is it?"

"Jonathan March—he says he's a grocer, who has been referred to you by Mr. Spurgeon."

"Show him in," briskly returned the magnate, turning to his desk.

When a tall, cadaverous, shrewd-looking man stepped in, Mr. Havens was engaged in counting money. There was quite a considerable quantity of it. It covered the desk. The visitor could not take his eyes from the gorgeous heaps of fives, tens, twenties, fifties, hundreds.

With the air of an extremely busy man, J. Huntington Havens waved Mr. March to a chair near his own.

"Be with you in a minute," said he.

His voice was not unkind, yet it carried that cold, precise quality of a man of affairs. Quickly, yet with the deliberate manner of one to whom money is no stranger, Hippo continued sorting the bills, counting them, from time to time making a memorandum of the various amounts.

He slipped neat manila bands around the various piles, penciled the amount of each denomination, and pressed a button beneath his desk. The secretary entered.

Havens swept the piles of bills together, handed them to the secretary, and inquired:

"Did you get back the book from the Oriental Trust Company?"

"No, sir."

"If it isn't balanced, take a duplicate deposit receipt from the receiving teller for this fifty-three thousand dollars, and get the book the first thing in the morning."

"Very well, sir."

The secretary closed the door, and Havens turned to his visitor.

"What can I do for you?" he queried affably.

"Well, Mr. Havens," gulped the visitor, twisting his hat in his hands, "I was referred to you to-day by a Mr. Samuel Spurgeon."

"Spurgeon?" Havens knitted his brows. "Who is he?"

"I dunno," candidly admitted the angular man. "I advertised a grocery fer sale up on a Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street, and he come in to look at it."

"Oh—Sammy Spurgeon—yes. I recall him, now—a client of ours—we've handled an account or two for him."

"So he told me, sir," went on the visitor, apparently relieved. "I guess," he went on diffidently, "that him and me can make a deal about my store."

"Yes," sharply went on the banker; "but why do you come to me?"

"Well, he said as how——"

The entrance of the secretary interrupted him.

"Mr. Spurgeon is outside, sir, and wants to know if you can see him for a moment."

"Yes, yes," hurriedly replied Havens. "Send him right in."

Mr. Spurgeon shook hands with Mr. March before seating himself.

"You beat me to it by about ten minutes," he remarked, glancing at his watch. "I was delayed a little. This

is the Mr. J. Huntington Havens I mentioned to you yesterday, Mr. March."

Mr. March bowed toward the banker respectfully. He was still thinking of that fifty-three thousand dollars.

"You see, Mr. Havens," went on the last comer, "I answered Mr. March's ad. He has a grocery for sale uptown. Mr. March is going out West, and he's willing to sell out quite reasonably. I don't know that I can pay him what he wants, but I've been looking over his stock. He has a nice place and a good trade."

Havens nodded curtly.

"I was just asking Mr. March why you gentlemen came to me about the deal," he observed. "I don't deal in grocery stores, Mr. Spurgeon."

The groceryman looked over at Spurgeon.

"It's this way, Mr. Havens," went on the banker's client. "I never let my money get cold. When I clean up on one deal, I'm into another. It just happens that I bought a batch of bonds the other day from you, remember?"

"Forty thousand Chesapeake & Ohio, yes. But what of it?" impatiently rejoined the banker. "Come to the point, Spurgeon!"

"Immediately, sir. Well, it left me a little short of cash, that investment. Now, if I deal with Mr. March, I've got to sell some of them."

"All right—I guess we can execute the order," briskly returned Havens. "How much will you need?"

"Somewhere between twelve and fifteen thousand dollars."

Havens nodded. "Bring 'em in," he announced, turning to his desk. "You'll excuse me, won't you?—I'm pretty busy this afternoon. When will you be in, Spurgeon?"

"Well, if I make this deal with Mr. March, here, probably to-morrow."

The two rose.

"All right—between nine and ten," snapped Havens, fingering the purring tape at the corner of the desk. "Good afternoon, gentlemen."

III.

"Well, did you get together?"

Havens turned his fatherly smile upon March and Spurgeon, who had arrived at nine-thirty in the morning.

March cleared his throat.

"Yes, sir," he gurgled. "We split the difference at thirteen thousand five hundred, and I signed up the bill of sale, giving him possession."

"I sent the securities in by messenger boy an hour ago," supplemented Spurgeon. "When can you give me my money, Mr. Havens?"

Havens pressed the buzzer beneath his desk. His secretary came in.

"Did you get Mr. Spurgeon's C. & O. bonds?"

"Yes, sir."

"He wants to dispose of about fifteen thousand dollars' worth of them, and you had better call up the exchange and get Foraker on the phone."

"Very well, sir."

"Foraker's our board member," explained Havens to March, as he turned to the desk. In a moment the telephone at his elbow tinkled sharply.

"Hello! Yes, Foraker, this is Havens. Say, Tom, one of our clients, a Mr. Spurgeon, is here. Remember that C. & O. bond purchase you made for him? Yes? Well, he wants to sell about fifteen thousand dollars' worth of them to get a little ready cash. What are they quoted at this morning?"

There was a pause.

"What's that? Ninety-eight and a quarter? How's that, Foraker? What? The market's sagged off a little? Well, say, what did he pay? Ninety-nine and interest? Well, I'll see. Maybe he'll want to wait a day or so—that means a loss of between a hundred and fifty and two hundred dollars. Never mind, I'll let you know."

Hippo Havens hung up, with a grave face.

"I'm very sorry, Mr. Spurgeon, but the market is a little weak this morning. Those bonds are gilt-edged, of course, but they've been hammering the quotations pretty hard the past ten days. I told Foraker not to execute a selling order until I learned your wishes."

Spurgeon was uneasy. "I wanted to close up with Mr. March this morning," he said hesitatingly. "But I hate to lose a couple of hundred dollars."

Mr. Havens waved a deprecatory hand.

"There, there, my dear sir. You haven't lost any money yet. Have you any other resources, Mr. Spurgeon?"

"Well—er—er—yes. I may say I have. I lent a friend some money a while ago—about six months. Mortgage, y' understand? I'll take a run uptown to Twenty-third Street—be back in a few minutes. Maybe I can get it from him."

"Or the market may take a turn," added Mr. Havens. "Anyway, I guess you're not in for much of a delay."

"Wait for me, Mr. March," said Spurgeon. "Here's that two hundred down to bind the bargain. I'll pull out somehow."

He flitted through the door without waiting for the receipt to be signed.

It was the urbane but methodical Mr. Havens who suggested that it be executed and left with him, until his client returned. And Mr. March, anxious to sell a grocery store that was losing money, for two hundred and fifty dollars more than it would inventory, saw nothing harmful in that, when he put his name to the paper.

Later on, however, he had reason to remember that he had accepted the money on account, while he also overlooked Mr. Spurgeon's absent-minded manner of carrying away the bill of sale he had signed.

But Mr. March, like many another, could see nothing but money whenever he looked over toward Mr. Havens' desk, and remembered the plethoric wads of currency that had littered it the day before.

He had hardly laid down the pen, after signing the receipt, when the impassive secretary entered, bearing a sheaf of checks and several packages of bills.

"Bernheimer & Co. have sold their T. C. & I.," observed the young man, dropping his precious burden before the magnate. "Foraker wants your receipt by noon."

"All right!" grunted Havens, picking up the money with a weary air, as if the sight of it bored him. "How much was it?"

"They got seventy-seven thousand dollars—it's all there except one check isn't certified."

"Hey! How many times have I told you not to bring an uncertified check into this office?" queried Havens, with a frown. "Run downstairs and have it certified—quick—before you report to Foraker. Excuse me one minute, Mr. March," he added, turning to his desk. "No—no—sit right there. Spurgeon will be back shortly."

By the time the abashed secretary had returned with the certified check, Mr. J. Huntington Havens had finished his precise, methodical enumeration of the checks and currency before him.

"All right, deposit this, and bring me a check to sign for seventy-seven thousand dollars, less commissions," he growled. "Any more accounts to close to-day?"

"Only Mr. Spurgeon's, sir."

"Very well—write to Berheimer & Co., and inclose a certified check to their order and close the account. Don't forget to thank them for their business."

The secretary bowed, and flitted out.

"Have a cigar, Mr. March?"

The grocer accepted the weed, with

a smile of thanks, and the aroma which floated from it was entirely in consonance with the luxurious character of the room. He puffed as he lolled back in the ornate Turkish rocker. Not every day did he enjoy the quiet atmosphere of a banker's private office. It was very soothing, after weighing sugar, manicuring cabbages, or measuring out lima beans, and Mr. March was almost among the lotus blossoms when Havens pulled out his watch.

"Gracious! Spurgeon's taking quite a little time. Wonder why he's so long?"

His impatience brought a look of alarm to the tradesman's face. He fidgeted uneasily. Then he leaned forward and inquired tremulously:

"Is this Mr. Spurgeon thoroughly responsible financially?"

"Why, so far as I know he's as good as wheat in the mill," heartily replied the banker, with a swift look at the other. "Why?"

"Oh, I was just thinkin'," apologetically smiled the reassured interrogator. "You've got to be careful in New York, Mr. Havens. There's some mighty slick crooks around."

The banker did not reply. The tinkle of the telephone bell broke in again.

"Yes, Foraker. What's that? Yes, yes, this is Havens speaking. What? The market's steadying? About the C. & O. bonds? Well, I can't say, Foraker, until Mr. Spurgeon gets back again. He's got a man waiting in the office with whom he's closed for a grocery store for thirteen thousand odd dollars, and, of course, he wants his money. Yes. I get you. No, not until I get a positive order—he's gone out to raise the money somewhere else—I'm expecting to hear from him any time."

He hung up the receiver.

"Well, Mr. March, I guess if Spurgeon don't get his money where he went he may be able to shave through on his bonds. Foraker says they're ninety-nine—the market's swinging back strong again. I knew they were good. Another half point, and he's out of the woods. Will you join me at lunch?"

Mr. March responded with alacrity. His saving temperament found the idea of a free meal very alluring. The time passed quickly, and when they returned to the office the secretary assured Mr. Havens that Mr. Spurgeon had meanwhile telephoned he would be in a little before three with the money.

The purchaser of the grocery arrived ten minutes later than he expected. He did not bring the cash, but explained that he had the assurance of it at nine o'clock the next morning. However, to make things absolutely certain, he decided to sell the bonds. Havens just missed getting Foraker on the telephone to sell the bonds before the exchange closed at three o'clock.

"But it'll be all right in the morning, the last quotation was par," remarked the banker, tearing off a section of the tape and proffering it.

"Well, Mr. March," diffidently remarked Spurgeon, "I'm awfully sorry for this delay, but I've got two sure chances in the morning. Meet me here——"

He turned to look at Havens.

"Eleven o'clock will enable us to clear the sale," replied that worthy, pulling down the top of his rosewood desk. "Good afternoon, gentlemen."

IV.

Jonathan March stared through the dust-begrimed windows of his grocery store. In the press of business with Spurgeon and Havens, including an elaborate dinner with the former, the merchant had not visited his store after getting back uptown.

He could not comprehend the vacancy that greeted his wondering eyes. Stock, shelving, curtains, counters, scales, truck—every article of merchan-

dise or appliance for handling it had vanished. He ran into the nearest saloon, and wedged frantically into a telephone booth.

"Yes, this is J. Huntington Havens," boomed a voice, when March had gotten the big banker's number. "Yes, we've closed out the bonds. Mr. Spurgeon was here a moment ago, inquiring about you. Certainly, by all means, come down. You had an appointment with him, didn't you, at this office?"

March ran for the subway. He could not feel entirely at ease until he had the balance of the purchase price of that store. He had not given any instructions to his clerks to leave it, nor had he authorized Mr. Samuel Spurgeon to remove the stock. But Spurgeon had the bill of sale—and with that evidence of ownership——

The grocer felt quite chilly, as he thought of his carelessness.

But, if he got the other thirteen thousand three hundred—he gulped as he remembered that he now only had two hundred "on account"—everything would be all right.

Something went wrong in the subway. Mr. March was panting when he finally emerged at Broadway and Wall, and he stepped lively as he hurried down into the heart of the financial district to confer with Mr. Havens.

"Mr. Havens is out," said the gracious secretary. "He has to attend to some matters over at the exchange. Yes, Mr. Spurgeon waited for you until he got a phone call that his baby had swallowed something, and hurried home. He'll be back in an hour or so, he said."

Mr. March waited. Mr. Spurgeon's baby must have been very ill, for he failed to return that afternoon. And it was ten minutes after three when the dignified and well-poised figure of J. Huntington Havens loomed upon the horizon. Mr. March heaved a sigh of relief. He followed Mr. Havens into the private office without an invitation.

"Hello, Mr. March, how are you today?" greeted the banker.

"Pretty fair," quavered the grocer. "Where is Mr. Spurgeon?"

"I left him here waiting for you this morning," replied the other man. "I've been out all day. Didn't you see him?"

Mr. March shook his head. A sudden suspicion flared into his mind.

"Say—where's my money?" he demanded.

Mr. Havens stared at him blankly.

"*Your* money?" he echoed. "I fail to follow you, Mr. March. I've never had any money of yours that I recall."

"No, of course not," stammered March, confused by the bland expression of surprise that settled over the features of J. Huntington Havens. "But—er—that is, I mean the money that Mr. Spurgeon had here for me."

Mr. Havens pressed the buzzer in a precise and orderly manner. He glowered down at the pile of currency and notes the secretary brought in.

"What about that Spurgeon account?" he icily demanded.

"Foraker sold fifteen thousand C. & O. this morning at the opening, sir," averred the secretary.

"Then what?" demanded the banker, with a faint trace of asperity.

"Why, sir, you had given us orders to clear the transaction at once, and turn the money over to Mr. Spurgeon. We did that. He waited here some time for a gentleman he wanted to pay it to, he said, then he got a message from his wife and hurried home."

"Have you the receipts?"

"Yes, sir."

"Bring them in here."

The faithful secretary produced the receipts, including a certified check marked "paid," drawn to the order of Samuel Spurgeon for fifteen thousand seven hundred and twelve dollars, and

cashed that very day; also a signed memoranda purporting to show that the gentleman had taken with him the balance of his bonds.

"This is all I know about Mr. Spurgeon's affairs, Mr. March," quietly remarked J. Huntington Havens, as he extended the papers to the dazed grocer. "His address is the Insomnia Hotel. You had better call on him yourself."

He bowed Mr. March through the door.

Half an hour afterward Banker Havens met Mr. Samuel Spurgeon in the Waldorf. They had a pint of wine, cut up the proceeds of the sale of the grocery, which had netted seventy-five hundred cash from a broker, and Mr. Spurgeon pocketed his ten per cent of the proceeds with a smile, at the same time he handed back the fifteen thousand he had received on the certified check.

Banker Havens counted it carefully, and thrust it into his trousers.

"When are you going to pull the next trick?" inquired Spurgeon.

"Oh, in a few days, when the holler dies down," smiled Banker Havens. "This is the fifth in three weeks—it isn't conservative banking to get too greedy, you know."

"I ought to have more than a ten-per-cent cut," remarked Spurgeon, with a swift glance from his heavy-lidded eyes.

"With me furnishing the frame-up and the fall money and the bank rolls? Nix," responded the banker. "There's five other boobs in this outside work beside you. Any time you ain't satisfied with a thousand or fifteen hundred a week—just resign, Sammy. Where would you have been but for me, hey? Didn't I pick you up on the street, straving, and set your feet on the golden path?"

"Yep."

"That's the way with you beggars," went on J. Huntington Havens witheringly. "Put you on horseback and you begin to bellyache for a six-cylinder Mercedes, with a chauffeur and a footman. Now, I've got a good friend, an old bucketshop man in Philly—who's beggin' to be let in on something. Any time, Sammy, that you get blisters on your fingers picking up this easy coin and want to lay off for them to heal up, just tip me your mitt is sore, and we'll play a utility man in your position."

Sammy sighed, and hastened in out of the incipient storm.

"What will we do next?"

"I'm going to frame up some big money," announced Hippo, shifting his perfecto to the other side of his thin-lipped mouth. "I'm getting tired of this kindergarten graft. I'll need you, too."

"Fine!" enthused his auditor. "But, Hippo, what if this last rooster starts to crow? He looks like tough picking to me!"

"Huh!" grunted the other sharper, "you paid him something on account, didn't you? His legal remedy is only a civil action—under the court decisions. Leave it to me, if he picks you up in this big town, which ain't likely with your mustache and a change of clothes. There's three million, nine hundred thousand other mutts that you're mingling with—remember. But don't prowl around the office for a few days."

J. Huntington Havens permitted himself a contented sigh as he sank into the extra deep cushions of his purple touring car the while he dropped a half dollar that one Jonathan March had painfully accumulated into the deprecatory palm of the taxi starter. The envious throng about the Waldorf door figured that he must, at least, be a director of a trust company, as they watched the long nose of the imported car turn up Fifth Avenue.

Banker Havens had an eye to "a front," and he enjoyed the stir his new machine created as he purred along the fashionable thoroughfare, heading uptown.

He directed the chauffeur to drive through the park when he reached the Fifty-ninth Street entrance. The low-hanging branches, the vistas of the little lakes gleaming through the tree trunks and across green bits of lawn were comforting to eyes that had grown hard and cold from counting large sums of money.

At One Hundred and Tenth Street the machine turned to negotiate the entrance to St. Nicholas Boulevard. From there it would drop over the crest of the hill into Riverside Drive. A swift glide out a few miles would bring J. Huntington Havens to a cross street leading into the Yonkers Road, where a neat little tavern, with an eye to élite patronage, put up a very nifty meal.

But before he had reached the turn into Riverside Drive, a tall, cadaverous, and somewhat agitated figure ran over and clutched the side of the machine, leaping on the running board, and Jonathan March, swinging a fist that might have done duty as a croquet mallet, shouted:

"Well, you crook, I've found you again, have I?"

J. Huntington Havens looked up with surprise.

"Hello, Mr. March! What can I do for you?"

He opened the door to the machine without hesitation, and beckoned to the extra deep cushion. "Want to take a spin up the Drive with me? And, by the way, here's a cigar I can recommend."

Jonathan March snorted his disgust.

"Is it profitable to trade cigars for grocery stores?" he sneered.

"I should think it would be—if the store was worth anything, and you didn't have to use up too many cigars," returned Banker Havens judiciously. "I've never been in the grocery business, myself."

March turned on him a look of furious rage.

"Clever, ain't you?"

Havens did not reply.

"You put it over on me purty slick—I'll admit it!" went on the angry New Englander. "But there's a policeman on fixed post up yonder, and——"

His voice choked. Anger paralyzed his power of speech, and he could only glare at the imperturbable man by his side, without a word.

J. Huntington Havens looked him over critically.

"I don't seem to get you," he coldly observed. "Why the loud yelps, friend? Yes, I see that policeman. There's one every little way along here. Do you want to talk with him?"

"I do," gritted the hot-tempered groceryman. "I want to tell him to arrest you. I want the district attorney to get his books on you—you low-livered, smooth-tongued confidence man."

"Why trouble the harness bull?" patiently queried the other man. "He'd probably run you in instead of me. Do you really want to visit the district attorney's office?"

"With you—yes."

"It isn't so far downtown, and there's probably somebody hanging around," mused J. Huntington Havens, without the flicker of an eyelash.

He leaned forward to the chauffeur.

"Do you know where the district attorney's office is?"

"Yes, sir."

"Drive there, please," commanded the banker.

"Now, see here," began March, with renewed anger, waving his flaillike arms threateningly.

"Aw, tell it to Sweeney!" viciously retorted Hippo. "You're like a kid that bellyaches for the moon and hollers like

a pig under a gate when you get what you ask for."

He leered triumphantly at the man whom he had defrauded, as the big machine whisked back down Broadway. J. Huntington Havens was playing billiards—mental billiards.

"Action and reaction" was the unvoiced thought behind his confident smile. He did not know that fate, rubbing the end of the cue of events, was poising for a try at a massé shot.

V.

District Attorney Kendall listened patiently to the excited narrative of Jonathan March, erstwhile groceryman, without a change of expression.

Banker Havens smoked on, without offering a word of extenuation.

He knew, as well as the noncommunicative chief law officer of the city and county of New York, that other and similar complaints had been filed against him.

But he merely waited, his face as inscrutable as if carved from granite, save for the steady puffs of his fresh perfecto.

"Why did you come here?" asked the district attorney, turning to him abruptly.

Hippo took his time in replying.

"This man threatened to have me arrested. I came here because he mentioned your name, and said he wanted me brought before you."

"But why?"

"If you wanted me, you'd get me," enigmatically replied the swindler. "If I come voluntarily it shows, at least, that I'm holding myself subject to your wishes."

"Who is this man, Spurgeon?" sharply countered Kendall, with a glance out of his window.

"He's a client of my banking and brokerage house."

The district attorney studied the perspective of roofs on which he was looking.

"How many people has he swindled?"

J. Huntington Havens sat a little more erect.

"Why don't you ask him, Mr. Kendall? I have nothing to do with his business affairs, except what my office records show. He closed out some bonds and got the money, and left when I was absent from the office."

"Where is your office?"

The banker extended his card. Kendall regarded it thoughtfully.

"Very well, Mr. Havens. I may take cognizance of this man's complaint, and, in that event, of course, you'll have to appear and answer it."

Hippo rose. "Any time," he said quietly, as he left the room.

March sat in a dazed heap. He had slid down in the chair until his long, angular figure seemed to be resting on the back of his neck.

"What makes you say this man defrauded you?" asked Kendall.

"Why, he said this here feller Spurgeon was 'as good as wheat in the mill,'" hotly retorted the grocer.

"Did he make any representation to you in writing?"

"I didn't ask him to."

"Well, you may come here to-morrow, and I'll give you the name of a magistrate to whom you may make your complaint. If he wants to hold these men to the grand jury, I'll prosecute them. They're a pair of clever sharpers—so clever that one of these days they're going to tumble. But you haven't as strong a case against Havens as against Spurgeon—provided either has committed a crime. It's a question. Be here to-morrow, at ten."

The magistrate to whom Jonathan March went the next day readily issued a warrant for both men on his complaint.

J. Huntington Havens was absent in Philadelphia, but called up when he re-

ceived the news, and told the magistrate that he would be on hand the next day. Samuel Spurgeon, haunting the outer office of the banker, was arrested without much trouble by two central-office detectives. He went to the Tombs quietly. The papers flamed with scare heads, and the bail was ten thousand dollars.

J. Huntington Havens appeared with one lawyer the next day, and Sammy with another. The magistrate ascended the bench, disposed of a grist of petty cases, and then turned to the alleged fraud perpetrated upon one Jonathan March.

That gentleman was sworn. He told of meeting Spurgeon, of the inspection of the stock of goods in the grocery, of the haggling over the price, and of the adjournment to the office of Banker Havens.

The story of how he had waited for his money, of the acceptance of two hundred dollars on account, was next narrated. The magistrate looked over at the witness in a puzzled fashion.

March admitted, on cross-examination by Spurgeon's lawyer, that he had not seen Spurgeon since the deal had been closed; that he had called at the Insomnia Hotel, and been told that Mr. Spurgeon was away with his wife for a day or two.

On cross-examination he also identified the receipt, which he had signed for two hundred dollars on account, and admitted that the balance had never been refused.

The detectives, who made the arrest, said the prisoner had made no statement, except that he was looking for a man named March, with whom he had some business. That was all.

Mr. Spurgeon's lawyer put a motion to the court:

"From the complainant's own testimony, your honor, as well as that of the detectives who arrested him, it now appears that a civil transaction, involving the purchase and sale of a grocery store, the consideration for part of which had already passed, is still pending. There is nothing in the testimony that warrants a charge of fraud against Mr. Spurgeon. He was called home by the illness of a member of his family. He has made no attempt to escape the jurisdiction of the court; he was even arrested while seeking the complainant. This court is surely not a collection agency, using the penal code to enforce the payment of civil debts. The defendant, Spurgeon, has never refused to pay the balance of the money. I move your honor dismiss the complaint."

"Motion granted, as to Spurgeon," tersely replied the magistrate. "There being no crime, of course, Mr. Havens cannot be held as an accomplice. Therefore, his discharge is also ordered."

"Now," ominously remarked Jonathan March to Spurgeon, as the group filed out into the corridor, "I'll give you a chance to pay over that balance that you owe me."

Sammy gave him a venomous glance. He merely jerked a thumb toward his attorney. A process server interposed, quietly securing service on the amazed ex-grocer of a summons and complaint in a damage action for fifty thousand dollars for false imprisonment.

Sammy Spurgeon bowed formally to Banker Havens, who returned the salutation as frigidly. They left through opposite doors. They rejoined each other in the Café Belgrade at Atlantic City.

"I didn't like that bedroom of mine in the Tombs a little bit," thoughtfully observed the namesake of the famous pulpit orator.

"Well, you ought to take a stick and stir the cards a while in a bushel basket until you learn how to shuffle better," pleasantly observed his partner. "I told you to keep away from the office. But they had nothing on you,

anyway, and there's nothing on me, either."

"Quite true," supplemented Samuel, as he poised his glass. "But I heard the bull that dragged me into that little hotel telling a turnkey after they locked me up on the first tier that the district attorney had six other complaints against yours truly."

"I wish there were sixty-six," retorted Hippo. "We've only gathered a miserable hundred and twenty-five thousand, all told. I want to frame up a game with a half-million bank roll, and play some Pittsburgh steel man tiddlewinks for a little of his, instead of seeing it all dwindle away at Monte Carlo. Crime, sonny, is a thing to beware of. You didn't commit any, neither did I. We ought to send your last pupil a bill for tuition. Some people are so ungrateful when you try to educate them that they won't even look at the entrance mat to a Carnegie library. I'm going back to New York at the end of the week. Which way?"

"The ponies at Juarez! I tell you, Hippo, that grocer is a Maine Yankee that's been filin' off his twang until he's almost disguised. I know that breed—they're worse'n Russell Sage ever was where a penny is concerned. He'll frame something on you, sure. Better join me. Juarez is just over the line, you know. There's plenty of action for your money around there, and the Rio Grande is a nice little thing when you want to sleep sound—because all the dicks stop on the north side."

But Hippo would none of it. Patiently and at great length he explained the legal side of the accusations which could be lodged against either of them; he pointed to the digests, teeming with a score of decisions supporting the statutes that took their clever operations plainly outside the criminal law. Spurgeon, however, persisted in following his hunch—for a month, at least. So, Hippo, rather miffed at his sudden untractability, wended his way back to the big town alone.

He was hardly well inside his office, when the same headquarters detectives who had taken Spurgeon in tow appeared at the door. This time, they carried a bench warrant. Surprised, but not alarmed, he phoned for his attorney, and gave nominal bail to appear and answer to an indictment, charging him with conspiracy to commit grand larceny.

He was more mystified when he learned that it had been set for trial ten days from the date of his arrest; that the case was in the supreme court, instead of general sessions. And he all but wilted when his attorney, himself a former assistant district attorney, informed him that an indictment had also been returned against his co-conspirator.

By dint of a physician's certificate that he was suffering from angina pectoris in acute form, the obese grafter stalled his own trial until after that of Sammy Spurgeon, who had been ignominiously overhauled at Philadelphia with a through ticket to the Southwest, the same night of his flight.

But Hippo's alleged illness vanished magically the same day the judge of the high court again dismissed the case against Samuel Spurgeon, in which Jonathan March was the State's chief witness, rendering an exhaustive opinion to the effect that no crime had been committed.

When Vic Masters called to offer his congratulations, J. Huntington Havens had recovered all of his old aplomb.

"What did I tell you?" he jeered. "Action and reaction, plus imagination—that's my formula for getting the coin, Vic. How about this billiard expert from Maine, with his massé shots, eh?"

"Can't prove it by me," stoutly retorted the still hungry bucket-shop proprietor. "But beginners sometimes

miss that massé shot when they first try it. Is he still after you?"

"What?" howled Hippo, in mock horror. *"Me?* Why, I'm only a conspirator. How can I go against the guns for conspiracy, when there was no crime committed, and the court has already ruled that way?"

"Stick to billiards, old pal!" warmly returned Masters. "How can a ball start rolling backward in the massé shot, then start the other way, and curve around to make the shot the other fellow can't make any other way?"

Hippo laughed. "Go out and chalk Cousin Jonathan's cue for him," he blithely retorted.

"Not me, Hippo. Once was enough. Sammy started to swim to France today. You better take a dive off the pier while you got a chance. That Brother Jonathan looks to me like he means *business!"*

He slipped away, leaving Hippo lighting another perfecto. He had barely taken a real whiff when his lawyer was announced.

"Notice of trial of your case tomorrow," explained Lawyer Chester. "Guess it's only a routine matter—they've got no chance. But to avoid any trouble, you better meet me at the Criminal Courts Building at ten o'clock."

"I'll be there," laughed Hippo. "I want to see that March gink squirm when you stick the stiletto into him about this 'no crime committed' decision, to which I'm a conspirator."

"It's a shame to do it," laughed his attorney. "You're a good client, Mr. Havens, but I'd be a little careful if I were you."

"I buy a new criminal code all fussed up with the annotations after every session of the legislature," scoffed the Brobdignagian individual. "So long as you keep inside the signposts, what's the use of borrowing grief?"

VI.

"The People of the State of New York against J. Huntington Havens," announced the judge.

"Ready," responded District Attorney Kendall.

"Ready," echoed Attorney Chester, beckoning to his client, who walked into the inclosure and took a chair next his own before the long table.

"Proceed, gentlemen," directed Justice Knight.

"Your honor," interpolated Havens' attorney, rising, "I desire to make a motion before any further proceedings are had in this case."

His honor bowed. The court stenographer poised his pen.

"This indictment," began Chester, with quiet confidence, "charges J. Huntington Havens with conspiring to defraud one Jonathan March, through the sale of a grocery store. The other defendant, Samuel Spurgeon by name, has already been brought to trial. I have here a certified copy of the record in that case, tried before Justice Grand. I wish to file it, and, upon that record, I base my motion to dismiss this indictment, and ask the discharge of my client."

He passed the document to the stenographer.

"Mark that 'Defendant's Exhibit A,'" directed the judge.

When it had been so inscribed, the stenographer passed it to the judge for perusal. He glanced over it, and handed it back.

"As your honor can readily see," went on Chester, "the indictment charged the defendant, Spurgeon, with fraud as a principal; and the defendant, Havens, with fraud as a conspirator, to perpetrate the alleged fraud. Justice Grand decided that there had been no fraud committed, therefore my client could not possibly be tried as a conspirator."

"Why not?" sharply demanded Justice Knight.

"Why, your honor, there can be no conspiracy to commit a crime where it has been decided that there is no crime."

"But who has so decided it?"

Chester's face showed his bewilderment. "Did your honor not read the certified transcript of the record which I just introduced in evidence?"

"I read it—yes. But what has that to do with this case?"

"I am of the opinion that it has much to do with it, your honor. A court of competent jurisdiction has already decided that there was no crime. Therefore, the indictment against Havens, as a conspirator, is automatically vitiated. There can be no conspiracy to commit a crime when there is no crime," reiterated the attorney warmly.

"Perhaps not," smiled Justice Knight. "But this court has not so decided. The decision which counsel files in support of his motion to quash this indictment is a decision of a court of coördinate—not superior—jurisdiction. It is usual in such cases for justices to take judicial cognizances of decisions affecting litigation brought before them, but that is a judicial prerogative—not a binding principle of law. Had I been sitting in the case of the defendant, Spurgeon, I might have ruled that there had been a crime committed. Even appellate judges sometimes differ. I deny the motion to quash the indictment, on the ground that this court, having coördinate jurisdiction with that of Justice Grand, differs as to the facts which constitute a crime. You may proceed with the case, gentlemen."

"Your honor will accord me an exception?" queried Chester.

The judge bowed.

"Say," whispered Hippo hoarsely, "what is this—a frame-up?"

"S-h-h! Wait a little—I don't know yet," replied the attorney for the defense.

A jury was quickly secured.

Jonathan March was sworn.

He narrated in detail the circumstances leading up to the disappearance of his stock of groceries.

"Now, Mr. March, you were the owner of this stock of groceries, and the various fixtures, were you not, and they were of the value of thirteen thousand dollars, lawful money of the United States?" asked the district attorney.

"They inventoried somewheres between twelve and fourteen thousand dollars, all told, and they belonged to my sister, Lavina," replied the witness.

"One moment," protested Chester, rising. "Your honor, I wish to call your attention to the language of the indictment. This charges the defendand, Havens, with conspiring to defraud the witness, March—not March's sister—of the sum of thirteen thousand odd dollars. The grand jury has never brought any indictment against my client for defrauding any one, except March. I renew my motion to quash the indictment on the ground that it now appears, from the testimony of the complaining witness, that he was not defrauded as the indictment alleges. There is a material variance between the charge in the indictment and the proof in its support."

"Mr. Stenographer," blandly observed Justice Knight, "you may enter on the minutes that the court directs that the indictment be amended by subsituting the words: 'Defrauded Jonahan March, as the agent of his sister, Lavina March,' et cetera, wherever the allegation of ownership appears."

"I object," shouted Chester. "The court's power to amend the indictment does not extend, under our code, to material matters. It may only remedy clerical errors."

"It appears to the court that the materiality of this indictment runs to the averment of the commission of fraud —not to who was defrauded—provided the status of the person defrauded is truly established to the satisfaction of the jury before whom the evidence for the prosecution is completed," replied Justice Knight. "In other words, the court has no patience with technical loopholes that defeat substantial justice."

"I except to the court's ruling and remarks," steadfastly replied the defendant's lawyer. "The constitutional rights of my client are being disregarded."

"If I am in error, you have the remedy of an appeal," observed the court.

March continued the homely tale, telling how the store was the property of his widowed sister, and all that she had in the world. Several of the jurors eyed the corpulent and uneasy figure of Hippo Havens with quiet malevolence as the tale went on.

Suddenly Chester again rose to his feet.

"Your honor, I desire to make another motion."

"Proceed, Mr. Chester."

"I now move the dismissal of this proceeding, and the discharge of the defendant from custody on the ground that the trial jury was sworn to well and truly try the indictment which alleged fraud against Jonathan March, and not against his sister. They were examined as to their relations with March—not his sister. They may all be sweethearts of his sister, for all that my client or I know to the contrary."

"Very well, Mr. Chester. The court will interrogate the jury at this stage of the proceeding. If any such relationships are disclosed as would tend to prejudice any of them, your motion will be granted."

Whereupon Justice Knight, over other objections and exceptions of counsel for the defense, rigorously examined each juror in turn. No one, it appeared, of the twelve men in the box, had ever had any dealings with Lavina March, or even knew of her existence, until that day.

The trial went on.

Hippotamus Havens did not repeat his query regarding "a frame-up." He merely sat stolidly in his chair, trying to appear undisturbed, while his weight dwindled away in a manner to shame the testimonials of an antifat cure.

When March narrated his story of the "so far as I know he's as good as wheat in the mill" episode, and concluded his fruitless efforts to recover his money from Samuel Spurgeon, Chester again rose.

The lawyer was certain that the case already contained enough reversible errors to overturn any verdict which might be obtained against his client. He knew that Hippo Havens was an unscrupulous, artful, designing swindler —one whose machinations had been planned against this very moment.

As a man he had no sympathy for such proceedings. As a lawyer, even under a system of ethics supposed to be above reproach, he must contest every step that jeopardized his client's liberty.

"Your honor, I again move the discharge of the defendant. It now appears that the alleged representation of the credit or reliability of the principal, Spurgeon, was made orally, and not in writing. The criminal code of this State is very specific upon this point. It leaves nothing to doubt or the discretion of the court. It declares in so many words, that an oral representaion concerning the credit or reliability of a third party is not binding upon the person making it, unless in writing. The rule is explicit in both civil and criminal matters. It appears that this statement was not in writing, and I now move the court to direct the

jury to render a verdict of not guilty in this case."

He cited the section in the criminal code, and sat down.

There was a long pause, the court reading and rereading the section of the code in question. He appeared dubious, and Hippo's look of triumph was stealing back when Justice Knight's voice was again heard.

"Counsel for the defense is correct in his statement of the law. But the law is not designed to protect the criminal, but the innocent against crime. Men unversed in the technicalities of the statute are liable to be defrauded by a clever criminal, should this contention of counsel be upheld. The defendant is alleged to be a banker. If he made that representation in good faith, it is clear that he should be discharged. If he planned to hide behind it to commit a fraud, he should be held. If the question is open to doubt, I am inclined to uphold the contention of defendant's counsel, both because of the statute, and because it is better that even a guilty man should go free than a possibly innocent man suffer. The duty of the court, as I conceive it, is to interpret that statute in its broadest sense, so that substantial justice may be done all parties. If the district attorney has no other witnesses on this delicate and very important point, I will grant the motion of counsel for the defense and discharge the defendant, and quash the indictment."

District Attorney Kendall was on his feet.

"We have six other witnesses, your honor."

"Proceed, gentlemen. The court, however, reserves the right to pass upon counsel's motion at the end of the evidence for the State. If it shall then appear that he was acting presumptively in good faith, this motion will be granted."

"Rotten law," hissed Hippo.

His counsel nodded. But the banker quailed when the next name was called. It was that of the first victim he had defrauded in the same way.

Chester battled valiantly, but in vain. He protested that his client was on trial for one crime—and that if he had committed a hundred, the rule of law forbade evidence of others, save on a formal indictment.

"We offer this evidence solely on the question of the defendant's intent to commit a fraud in the case of March," retorted the district attorney.

Justice Knight permitted it to be given for that purpose only.

One by one the six took the stand. All told the same story of loss from purchases through Spurgeon, or some other individual, whom they had never succeeded in locating.

The jury listened with an intentness that showed their interest. The story of each witness was the same. All had accumulated savings. Each had a business of some kind, and each had lost all but a trivial payment on account, through the clever manipulations of the scoundrel at the bar, and his accomplices.

Their damning reiteration of the phrase "good as wheat in the mill," drove home the nails in the coffin of Hippo's hopes, as he realized that the mills of the gods were now grinding for him the grist he had so astutely prepared for his victims.

By advice of his counsel, Hippo did not offer any evidence in defense.

The verdict of guilty was a mere matter of form. But Chester, with all a lawyer's respect for the letter of the statute, gave Hippo a hypo of hope after he was led away to a cell in the Tombs.

"Nothing to it at all, Havens. You have been tried for a crime that was never committed; you have been forced to plead to an indictment that was never found; you have been found guilty by

a jury that was never selected to try the offense—if there had been either an offense or an indictment within the meaning of the law. The case will go to the devil on appeal, and I'll go right down and get you a bond. You still have plenty of money, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes."

Hippo thankfully took the fountain pen the attorney passed through the bars of his cell in the Tombs, and filled out a check.

"Post the cash with a bonding company, and get me out in the morning," he pleaded.

"Sure," assented Chester, hurrying away.

Hippo consoled himself, as he sent out for supper, that his tenure of incarceration would be brief. Chester knew the law. It had been a dirty frame-up; judge, district attorney, and victims had all conspired against him, in violation of constitutional rights, which he had been guaranteed by the blood of the men who fought at Lexington and Concord.

He grew quite eloquent in dilating on the legal loopholes of his case to his cellmate, a blue-muzzled burglar, about to "take a plea" for his fifth "bit."

"Aw, de smoother youse guys are, de harder you fall," was the crushing comment the old crook made. "Wait till youse taste dat stew up de river—den you'll git so warmed up dat you'll talk de shine off'n de pan!"

Indignantly Hippo sent out for supper. Later on, seeing the old-timer's ravenous stare at his bountiful spread, he invited him to share it.

"Youse can't beat God!" remarked the burglar, as he licked up the last crumb. "Looka me! I'm one of de crack peter men of the country—but I alluz fall for a skirt!"

"But safe robbing is prohibited by statute," protested Hippo.

"Sure," grinned the blue-muzzled one, "and wot youse pulled off was dead legal, hey? But we're bot' in here, jest the same, ain't we?"

Hippo didn't sleep well, and he had bad dreams when he snatched fitful cat naps. The odor of the Tombs oppressed him. The walls were so strong, the people in the cells so utterly without heart, the keepers so brutally heedless, even the meager necessities the place supplied were difficult to obtain.

He was very thirsty about midnight, and rattled long and vainly for fresh water. The only comment the guard made to his complaint was that he ought to move to the Waldorf where the waiters were more numerous.

Hippo winced. Then he gave the fellow a half dollar. Somehow, he felt dubious about seeing the Waldorf again as quickly as he had expected, after eating there only the morning before. It seemed centuries since he had looked upon that ornate breakfast room with its immaculate silver, spotless linen, and solicitous waiters, yet his watch assured him it had been only a brief eighteen hours.

He was downright nervous and feverishly perturbed when Chester reappeared the next morning.

"Have you got the bond?" he avidly demanded. "I want to get out of this hole."

"No," admitted the attorney. "The fact is, Mr. Havens, I couldn't get the money on this check."

"What?"

The dismayed exclamation of the big prisoner was compounded equally of the essence of tragedy and amazement.

"The people who appeared as witnesses yesterday," went on the attorney mournfully, "led by Mr. March, have attached your bank deposit, your office furniture, and even your automobile. The sheriff is in charge of it. I have been wondering how we will get your appeal through without funds."

"How much does it take?" Hippo's voice held a tremor, in spite of the fact that his cellmate was sneering at him. "We might squeeze through with two thousand dollars, I should say."

The swindler reached into his pocket and pulled forth a receipt from the prison officials for twenty-five hundred dollars in bills of large denominations, of which he had been denuded the night before.

"I've got enough to eat on—give me a receipt, grab that before they do, and get busy the minute you can," he observed, signing the order, which the attorney hurriedly prepared.

"This is most fortunate," murmured Chester. "I'll make a motion for a stay of proceedings, pending the appeal, and get to Albany in sixty days, at the outside."

"Sixty what!" exploded his client. "Have I got to stay in here that long? Why, I'll be dead sixty times over in sixty days."

"Have you any other resources?"

"Nary a red beside that balance of five hundred down there in the office. I'll need that to eat on. I can't go the grub they bring up here, the smell is enough to knock me down."

"I'll prosecute the appeal with as little delay as possible," Chester assured him. "Try and make the best of it. We're sure to win out, or I'll quit practicing law. The case is the strongest I could possibly take up for review, and the judges above are great sticklers for a strict interpretation of the law."

VII.

Hippo found his nickname fitted in Sing Sing, where he was taken after his sentence of six years was imposed.

If he could have adjusted himself to the food as easily as he did to the balance of the environment, he would not have found the beginning of his imprisonment so hard to endure.

Naturally astute, with a record of having put over "big jobs," and much superior mentally to the other dregs of humanity with whom he must associate until his appeal was decided, J. Huntington Havens, in time, came to rule his little coterie as arbitrarily as in other days.

The courts denied his motion for a stay of preceedings, pending the appeal. He was in the Tombs only a week. Hippo hated to leave, but he had no choice. Chester's last words, however, comforted him.

"I've practically settled the case with the district attorney, on appeal. Of course, I've had nothing done on it yet, but we've a verbal understanding, and I'll file the notice of appeal Monday, as soon as I get a transcript of the record, showing you've been denied a new trial. That has to be entered first, you know."

Hippo didn't know, but he nodded, as if he always had known it, together with other sections of the criminal code, which he had once considered a happy hunting ground. He made the best of his new environment, and waited patiently for a letter from Chester.

"He's honest, even if I am a crook," he told himself, when the first week had dragged by without a word.

The water boy on his gallery that night passed Hippo "a stiff," and J. Huntington Havens all but passed out of the body when he read the first page of the forbidden daily paper.

It was from New York, and, although a week old, was a treasure incomparable to a convict from that city.

"War With Spain" flaunted its black letters across the first page.

J. Huntington Havens' opinion about war coincided with that of General Sherman as he saw, in the list of prominent members of the New York National Guard ordered to the front, the photograph of his lawyer. The regiment was already halfway to Tampa.

Then he keeled over on the floor in a dead faint. The guard counting up unlocked the cell. The doctor revived Hippo with difficulty, and nitroglycerin tablets. He stayed in the hospital two days. From there he was taken to the office of the principal keeper, and interrogated regarding how the daily paper come to be in his cell.

He would not betray the gallery man —declaring obstinately that "his head was bad, and he couldn't remember." His physical collapse precluded confinement in the dungeon, so he was mulcted ten days' commutation for good behavior, and put to work in the shoe shop.

Day after day, eating his rancid soul out in misery, he waited for news of his attorney's return. Week after week the expected letter failed to materialize.

He had already given up hope, and canceled six months of his six-year term when he received the news that Chester would land in New York the following week, and would be up to see him as soon as he was "mustered out."

Then came another heart-breaking period of a month with no letter. Another, and yet another, and then Hippo wrote and demanded to know why he had been deserted.

By return mail came the attorney's reply. He was just leaving the army hospital at Montauk Point, Long Island. Typhoid fever had left him a wreck. He would be up as soon as he was strong enough to travel. Meanwhile he would work on the appeal.

At last, when a full year had transpired since his conviction, Chester arrived one day at the prison. Hippo knew, from his emaciated appearance and feeble vocalization, that the attorney had come as soon as he was able.

"I had to go to Albany first to file the appeal," explained the lawyer. "Mr. Havens, I'm awfully sorry for what you've had to suffer——"

Hippo waved aside the apology. No one had called him Mr. Havens for so long that the mere utterance of the name was amends for his long purgatory.

"I guess I'm in for another six months," he genially remarked, "before that appeal will be acted on."

Chester hung his head.

"You poor devil," said he.

"Whatta y'mean—pullin' stuff like that on a guy in a pogy?" sharply queried the former banker.

"Mr. Havens, there's a fatality about this case that I can't understand," went on Chester. "There could have been no question about your release if I could get this case to a hearing. I've even talked with some of the judges about it——"

"Hey?" Hippo's growl broke in.

There was something sinister in the abject appearance of the lawyer—he seemed worse hit than his client by what had transpired. Also, a grinning imp of dubiety fleered into the convict's brain at the idea of talking over his case with judges of the appellate court before the argument of the appeal. It wasn't ethical.

"Yes, my boy," blubbered Chester, evidently unstrung from his recent protracted illness, "they assured me that I was right all the way. The case couldn't stand on appeal."

"Fine!" muttered the still-puzzled prisoner. "Go to it, kid. I'll stand what I've got to do till you get me out——"

The lawyer's despairing gesture cut short his optimistic observation.

"Mr. Havens—we can't appeal—we're too late!"

"Too late?" listlessly repeated the striped figure.

"Under the code all criminal appeals must be taken within a year from the time of conviction," explained the attorney. "I did not discover, until I ar-

rived in Albany, that the year had expired. The war—my illness——"

"Huh!" Hippo's sarcastic grunt was not so despairing as it might have been. He seemed to steady himself under this last blow.

"What's the matter with a writ of habeas corpus?"

Chester shook his head.

"The code of civil procedure forbids that relief, as well. It distinctly says: 'In any case, where the prisoner is incarcerated as the result of a final decree of a court of competent jurisdiction, a writ of habeas corpus will not lie. The remedy in such cases is by mandamus on appeal."

The irony of the situation almost smothered the confidence man for an instant. Then he straightened himself proudly. For another fleeting moment he was J. Huntington Havens, the crafty, astute, farseeing criminal to whom the loopholes of the law were refuges in times of stress.

"Why, Chester, that section is unconstitutional. The Constitution of the United States and that of New York State specifically provide that the writ of habeas corpus shall not be suspended *nor abridged* except in cases of riots, invasion, or martial law—I forget the exact language."

Chester nodded despondently. "I know, my boy," he admitted. "But, by the time we can get a decision on that, your sentence will be over. It would take years, and might even go to the United States Supreme Court."

"Shoot 'em over, kid—let's see what y' got—don't mind me," sarcastically rejoined the convict. "I've got a couple of thousand bones to bet that we'll win—that appeal money is all right, ain't it?"

"I had it in a special deposit in a New York trust company," explained the attorney, in an apathetic voice. "The bank failed yesterday."

The waiting guard approached.

"Time's up!" said he firmly.

J. Huntington Havens' teeth clicked sharply, as he was led back to his cell.

They were still clicking an hour later. All night their interminable clicking continued, like the collision of billiard balls propelled in swift succession, and with expert aim by one whose cue was unerring—recalling that adroit, mystic, fascinating quality of touch by which a world's champion rolls up point after point, no matter what position the balls assume during the play.

But J. Huntington Havens could not stop if he tried. Something in his nervous system had snapped—and his teeth rattled on and on into the night.

He remembered, as he tried to still the ceaseless chatter, the remark of Vic Masters at the luncheon, when the former bucket-shop man had begged to be let in on the good thing Hippo was milking for tens of thousands.

Masters had said something about "massé shots," and J. Huntington Havens, with five horrid, dreary years still to serve, in the fetid darkness of his noisome cell, cursed the combination of malign circumstances which had befallen him.

"Shucks!" He spat between his clicking teeth, "I'm here for a crime that never was committed, on an indictment that no grand jury ever found, convicted by a trial jury that never was empaneled to hear the case. Now I'm denied a writ of habeas corpus, and some blasted, psalm-singing bank cashier robs me of my last nickel. What kind of a game is it, anyway—all massé shots?"

"Pepper McHenry," an undergraduate of Harvard, makes his début in the next issue. Introduced by Holworthy Hall.

Mrs. Mallon's Cigarette Case

By James Hay, Jr.

Author of "For Free Mexico," "A Dress Suit and a Fight," Etc.

In which the secret agent of the department of state knew he was right and proceeded in accordance with the ancient precept. But despite the precept it isn't always wise to go ahead when you're sure you're right. A story of diplomatic relations concerning certain concessions that were to be purchased in a Central American republic.

"I'VE made a bet with Bessie Niland," Mrs. Mallon, drawing my attention from Mrs. Hollofield, explained for no apparent reason; "my cigarette case against her opera glasses."

"An' I will hol' ze stakes," supplemented Tegellier. He was a thin, saturnine Frenchman who, with his slightly stooped shoulders and long neck, seemed always to be looking down upon and studying the people around him. His black hair grew sparsely about his temples, and a scar began near the top of his left ear, and extended a couple of inches across his cheek. He was swarthy and ugly, but his urbanity and old-school courtesy were impressive. Women liked him.

He made the remark and looked smilingly toward me from the opposite side of the table. I felt sure immediately that, in some way, the cigarette case would communicate to him the information he wanted, information which it was my duty to keep from him. Furthermore, Mrs. Mallon would be his agent in the matter—and I liked Mrs. Mallon.

"What is the wager?" I inquired, desiring time for thought.

She rose from the table.

"Bessie will tell you while I get the case," she said, going toward the door.

I, also, rose.

"May I——"

"It's no bother," she assured me, her smile vivid, and left the room.

Obviously, I must have an excuse for following her. The dinners in Mrs. Hollofield's apartment had the charm of informality—there were six of us at table that evening—but, even so, there was no reason for my pursuing Mrs. Mallon, who went in search of her cigarette case. I sought to build up my exit.

"And the opera glasses?" I asked Miss Niland, the indolent blonde at Tegellier's right.

"Oh, wait until after dinner," she answered carelessly; but, seeing that I expected to do the errand, added: "They're in the pocket of my cloak."

Tegellier watched me out of the door.

Mrs. Mallon was standing in Mrs. Hollofield's bedroom, the cigarette case held carelessly in her hand, when I entered. The maid, who, evidently, had just given it to her, was farther back in the room.

"I'm Miss Niland's messenger," I explained to Mrs. Mallon; and to the

maid: "Miss Niland's opera glasses. They're in the pocket of her coat."

"This is like gambling—really," said Mrs. Mallon, on her way out. "Louise will find the glasses for you."

While the maid rummaged among the cloaks, I stepped into the hall and watched Mrs. Mallon. She returned to her place, and handed the case across the table to Tegellier. He made no attempt to open it. Mrs. Hollofield said something, at which everybody laughed.

The maid gave me Miss Niland's opera glasses, and I went in, and handed them to the owner. She passed them to Tegellier. In all that time the Frenchman had made no attempt to open the cigarette case. He had not so much as exchanged a significant glance with Mrs. Mallon.

And yet I knew that in the case was the information he had to get and act on before midnight. And I knew that he knew it. Mrs. Mallon had done, under my very eyes, the thing I wished to prevent. She had given him the secret.

That afternoon I had been in conference with Peffernitz, the representative of the German syndicate which wanted to buy the big concession from the Central American republic of Guaturas. Peffernitz was tall and fat. When you looked at him, he made you think only of stature, and bulk, and general immensity. He was huge. When he talked, you forgot about his hugeness, and admired his thinking powers. He had a brain that surpassed his physical development. It was quick and fertile, and it went to the heart of things—so much so that, when you heard his deep bass voice, you were reminded necessarily of a giant wielding with infinite skill a light, glittering, deadly weapon.

And, looking at me out of his hard, gray eyes, he told me:

"Frau Mallon—she is the one. Understand me. I do not talk in riddles. We—we Germans—want to buy the Carreror concession. So do the French, Tegellier's crowd." He puffed his cigar twice before he continued: "The United States has established this protectorate over Guaturas. It is your department of state, not President Huave, of Guaturas, that will decide who gets the concession—we or the French. That is understandable?" He blew out a cloud of smoke and annihilated it with a wave of his great hand. "To-day is the last day for both sides to submit their bids for the concession. It is regrettable, but the thing has gone out of the hands of diplomacy, and your American spirit of barter and trade has made an auction of it. Whoever bids the higher sum and offers the more advantageous terms will get the concession. We put in our bid at three o'clock this afternoon. You see?"

He got slowly to his feet, and threw his cigar to the hearth. For a few moments he towered above me, as if he wanted to impress on me by his height the weight of what he was about to say.

"The Frenchmen, since then, have made the excuse that there has been a delay in getting certain cabled information from Paris—and the state department has ruled that this day, which is the last day, does not end until midnight. And Tegellier's crowd has not yet put in its bid. *Donner und blitzen!*"

He swore at great length, striding up and down the room like an enraged titan.

"Mallon—you know Mallon—well, because of his position, he knows the terms of the German bid, my bid. There you have it. So! If Mrs. Mallon has found out from Mallon the figures of our bid, and if she communicates them to Tegellier, we're lost. The French will submit the better bid."

"Mrs. Mallon!"

I was so incredulous that I laughed.

"Gott! Gott! Do not laugh, man! Is it not yet understandable? Mrs.

Mallon has Central American blood in her veins. We Germans will be friends of Huave. Mrs. Mallon's sympathies are with Huave's enemies, the revolutionists. And the French would be against Huave. You know what Huave thinks of them, and how he has treated them. I tell you, Frau Mallon means to let the French play this little game with marked cards. My friend, you must not let her communicate with Tegellier."

"But I have watched Tegellier all these weeks. He has had no conversation with Mrs. Mallon. And how do you know all these things?"

I refused to be convinced.

"It is in the day's, what do you call it, work. It is the routine of diplomacy." Suddenly, he exhibited his disgust. "Ach! you Americans talk of your shirt-sleeves diplomacy. I tell you, my friend, it is nothing. The real diplomacy is patience, and scrutiny, and rumor, and gossip, and the flicking of an eyelash, or the tremor of a lip."

He stopped by the window and laughed, deep down in his throat.

"And now," he said, "I'll tell you something else. Frau Mallon and Tegellier, strange as it may seem, have been invited to dine with a—a Frau—Frau Hollofield at seven o'clock this evening."

"Impossible!"

"It is not impossible. It is true! You know Frau Hollofield? *Gut!* Have yourself invited there."

It was then that I contributed a surprising bit of news.

"I am invited," I said steadily.

Peffernitz let his lower jaw drop. It was the first time I had ever seen him at a loss for expression.

"So!" he said softly, at last; and again: "So! Frau Mallon will give him the information there. And she will do it in such a way that afterward they can say they spent the evening with you. That is, Tegellier will say that. He knows who you are. Don't think he does not. But she is ignorant. I know that. *Gott!* That Tegellier is a wise man, a brilliant man."

"And Mrs. Mallon a brilliant woman," I voiced my admiration of her.

"Of course," he agreed quickly. "Does a brilliant man ever look to a fool for assistance?"

Another point suggested itself to me.

"But what of this afternoon? Why does not Tegellier see her now?"

"I have seen to that, my friend. He is being watched—by your men and mine. Even the telephone—we have that arranged—the switchboard operator at her apartment house. Also, Tegellier would not attempt it. It would bring up suspicion. Is it not understandable? They are sure of the thing—sure of it under your eyes. And then, you understand, Tegellier will have his bid at the state department before midnight. The department will wait for it until midnight."

That was how Peffernitz had described the situation to me, this affair which had to do with vast stretches of territory, great sums of money, and the probable fate of Huave—the purchase of several hundred square miles of valleys, and mountains so varied in climate that they have within their bounds as many different species of birds as there are in the whole of continental Europe—this privilege of making money out of a country where the golden dome of the blooming cortes tree rises above the lavish loveliness of orchids growing wild, where ants hunt in columns three miles long, where the riches under the earth equal the mahogany, rubber, and fruit wealth on its surface—where millions upon millions of dollars are to be had by the hand that reaches out for them.

And the bigness of it rested for a moment like a haze upon my mind as I slipped back into my seat and saw Tegellier across the table, the opera glasses

and the cigarette case in his long, muscular fingers.

"What is the wager?" I repeated the question I had asked several minutes before, and turned to Mrs. Mallon. "Miss Niland didn't explain."

"I made the bet that there was a time when the Indian princes in Central America wore as their insignia the gorgeous, green tail feathers of a bird called the quetzal," she explained.

"You will win, I think," I ventured. "Indian princes have worn everything and nothing as insignia."

"It is not ze custom, but ze length of ze feathair zat is dizpute'," Tegellier elaborated.

He dropped the opera glasses to the cloth in front of him, but slipped the cigarette case into the breast pocket of his evening coat.

"Yes," Mrs. Mallon agreed. "The real point is my contention that the feathers are, as a rule, a yard long."

While young Bissell projected a few observations concerning the influence of barbaric costumes on the current fashions, I reached the definite conclusion that, whatever happened, I would not give Tegellier and Mrs. Mallon an opportunity for one whispered word between them. If Tegellier attempted to leave the apartment with the cigarette case in his possession, I would try to prevent it.

During the remaining half hour that we spent at the dinner table, everybody seemed keyed to an unnatural pitch. The atmosphere was strained, volcanic. To me, this was most apparent. I got the idea that there was a direct thought connection between Mrs. Mallon and Tegellier, a slender, wirelike thing that narrowly escaped being visible. I felt almost able to reach out and cut it. And on it hung the outcome of the struggle of the millionaires of two countries for a great prize.

But this was not all. Mrs. Mallon's reputation depended also on that thread. Her husband's position in the state department, her place in society, the enormity of the thing which she proposed to do—these considerations made it patent that she was close to ruin. She knew it. Tegellier knew it. And it was his regard for this fact, together with his knowledge that discovery of what she did might vitiate his bid, that made him eager to secure the information without arousing suspicion in the slightest degree.

I had no time to waste. If possible, I would accomplish my ends without trouble or exposure for anybody.

"Your cigarette case," I suggested finally, to Mrs. Mallon, "it is of unusual design, isn't it? May I see it?"

"Why, of course," she answered, and there was in her eyes an expression which, translated into mere words, said: "You foolish man!"

"Al-low me," Tegellier handed it to me across the table, his gesture eloquent of grace.

I touched the spring, and the case was open in my hand. It was of gold, made so that only one wing of it was for cigarettes. It contained seven cigarettes, of several different brands.

Mrs. Mallon was telling young Bissell that he and Miss Niland might drop her at her home on their way to a dance farther uptown.

I ran my fingers along the inner edge of the wing that held the cigarettes. I was looking for the spring to lift the thin gold lining of the wing, and show that a piece of paper was concealed between the lining and the metal of the outside piece of the case. I could feel, rather than see, a slight line that proved the existence of the spring, but I could not find the spring.

Tegellier watched me in smiling approval. It was as if he desired to share my admiration of the case.

Mrs. Mallon, who had been watching my exploring fingers, turned directly to me, and voiced a mock little shriek.

"Mercy! The man has proved that I supply my cigarette case from the brands of my various friends," she said, and, catching up the case, snapped it shut, and handed it back to Tegellier. "There are hardly two of any one kind."

Tegellier restored the case to his pocket as all of us left our places at the table.

"Bessie and Mr. Bissell," Mrs. Mallon said to Mrs. Hollofield, "will drop me on their way uptown."

Mrs. Mallon, followed by Miss Niland, went to put on her wrap.

I said at the beginning of this story that Mrs. Mallon was wonderful among women. This was not merely because of her striking beauty—her super-crimson lips and dead-white skin, and burnished-copper hair. Nor was it due entirely to her feminine charm, of which she had an extravagant amount. Rounding out these things, was her mental brilliancy. Her loveliness impressed you as if it might have been an exquisite half transparency lighted by an inward glow—and that inward glow was her intellect. In some way, you got the idea that the illumination was from a light that was quick, darting, ceaseless. She was the brightest woman I ever encountered.

And it was the combination of all these—her beauty, her brain, and her self-confidence—that enabled her to do things with an air of absolute finality. Whenever she made a statement or a decided move, it immediately was written on the atmosphere that it was right—something like the laws of the Medes and Persians.

It was for this reason that, when she left the room saying she was about to depart with Miss Niland and Mr. Bissell, I was at a loss. For the moment, I could not decide how to carry out my design of not permitting Tegellier to go away with the cigarette case.

Tegellier himself gave me the mental spur I needed.

"I carry fr-rom your apartment," he said to Mrs. Hollofield, "much plundair. I am al-mos' like ze poor girl zat was kill' undair ze accumulate' armor of ze returning war-riors."

Mr. Bissell had gone for his coat, leaving the three of us—Mrs. Hollofield, Tegellier, and myself—alone in the room. I seized the opportunity. He knew who I was. There was no need of dissembling with him.

"I am going to ask a great favor of you, Mrs. Hollofield," I began, my whole manner an apology to her. "Monsieur Tegellier and Mrs. Mallon had an appointment with me for to-morrow. I find I shall be unable to keep it, and, if you will be so kind—if I may ask it—may we not borrow this room for a few moments?"

Mrs. Hollofield was surprised. She looked to Tegellier.

"I do not know—I cannot re-call," he began, but did not finish the sentence.

Mrs. Mallon had reëntered the room.

"Perhaps," I suggested, showing a polite regret that Tegellier's memory had failed him, "Mrs. Mallon will re-call."

Mrs. Hollofield explained.

"Why, certainly," Mrs. Mallon replied. "Doubtless Monsieur Tegellier has forgotten because it was I, not he, who arranged for the—the conference."

Her manner signified that already we possessed the room for a confidential interview.

Mrs. Hollofield withdrew, closing the door after her.

The reason I consider that Mrs. Mallon's behavior in what followed was extraordinary is because she did not know definitely who I was. Tegellier did know, and small credit is due him.

"It must be something of vast importance," said Mrs. Mallon, standing beside the table so that the light from the chandelier flooded her face.

"It is," I said succinctly, and looked at Tegellier.

He was standing near the mantel, his back to the open fire.

"I confess," he said, his slight bow eloquent of his bewilderment, "zat I am puzzle'."

It was past nine o'clock, and every minute was valuable to him. Mrs. Mallon, mindful of this as he was, did not waste time.

"And now," she asked, her eyes looking full into mine, "why is this done?"

I turned to Tegellier.

"Surely," I asserted, "you know exactly why."

He stepped to one side of the fire, and leaned one elbow on the mantel, almost overturning the little alcohol cigar lighter.

"Pardon," he returned simply, steadying the lighter. "I am uttairly at a loss —ut-tairly."

I indicated a chair, which Mrs. Mallon refused. She preferred to stand, with the light strong upon her face. I remember that it emphasized the fiery glow of her hair.

"Then this becomes a painful situation for me—most painful," I began my explanation.

"Pardon again," Tegellier interposed, "but it happen' zat I have a re-real appointment for zis evening, an' I fear I shall be late."

"I shall delay you as little as possible," I assured him, and turned to Mrs. Mallon.

She was calm, politely expectant. There was about her mouth the hint of smiles.

"It is painful," I directed my apology to Mrs. Mallon, "because there have been rumors and gossip about you, Mrs. Mallon—you and Monsieur Tegellier."

Her face did not change—only, there was about her lips that which foretold more definitely the coming of laughter.

"And it affects your husband. It concerns the Carreror concession, about which you know."

This time she smiled, but she did not answer my questioning pause.

"About which you know, Mrs. Mallon?" I repeated.

"Oh, yes," she said pleasantly. "Of course, I know about it."

"The German syndicate has put in its bid for that concession. Monsieur Tegellier's syndicate has until midnight to submit its counter proposition. Mr. Mallon's position in the state department gives him the opportunity, forces upon him the necessity, of knowing the figure, the number of years, the royalty, the terms of payment, everything in the German bid."

Mrs. Mallon looked at Tegellier and back to me, and spread out her hands, making the gesture a big question.

"Well?" was all she said.

Tegellier spoke, and his low tones were harsh.

"An' what is your con-cern in zese affair' of business an' diplom'cy?" he asked me, straightening to his full height.

He was far enough away from the light for his face to be in shadow, but I could see that it was troubled.

"You know what my concern is," I replied easily, "but I will tell Mrs. Mallon. I am a secret agent of the department of state—and I have full powers to act."

"To act in what?" inquired Mrs. Mallon.

There was in her voice only a devouring curiosity.

"It is my duty," I went to the point abruptly, "to prevent any communication between you and Monsieur Tegellier this evening. There must be no interchange of words between you two alone."

Monsieur Tegellier made no attempt to hide his anger.

"It is ze outrage!" he said to me, making his low-pitched words a threat.

"It is horreeble—outrage—for you to make such accusation agains' Madame Mallon. Do you not know who she is? Can you not remembair what is due to ze presence of a la-dee? I was'e no time to deny any partic'pation on my part in such silly scheme as you have indicate'. But I do protes' again' your insulting Madame Mallon. Hair husban', unfortunately, is not here to protec' hair. But, in his absence, I shall do so. We have not communicate'. We have no intention of doing so. I tell you, ze whole of it is absurd, uttairly ab-surd! If you had not stopp' me in zis insolen' mannair——"

"If Monsieur Tegellier will permit," Mrs. Mallon's cool voice interrupted him, "I will make a suggestion which will end this remarkable scene at once." She turned to me. "Perhaps you have a theory, a definite idea?"

"I have," I answered her.

"What is it?" As she put this question, there was in her manner for the first time the sharpness of disdain. Her glance toward Tegellier catalogued me as something below them.

"It is quite definite," I told her, conscious that Tegellier, striving to control his angry impatience, was twining and intertwining his fingers so that the flesh rasped audibly. "You already have communicated."

Mrs. Mallon again questioned me with her outspread hands.

"How?"

"The figures are concealed in your cigarette case, of course," I said crisply.

Mrs. Mallon laughed softly, expressing the tolerant amusement one might feel in witnessing the clumsy antics of a clown.

I looked at Tegellier, and he scowled. The scar on his face, I thought, throbbed a little.

"How delightful!" she said, still amused.

If I had not known, if I had not been certain beyond the shadow of a doubt, that her cigarette case had the false bottom, I would have been prepared to give up the fight then and there. But there was no question about the thing. Peffernitz had told me only a few hours before that Tegellier relied upon her. Her husband's reputation and her own hung on the outcome of the next few minutes if there was any truth in the whole theory which I had constructed. Unless Peffernitz had lied, and unless all my methods of argument and deduction were entirely wrong, she confronted the greatest moment of her life. And yet she laughed, standing there in the full light of the big chandelier, her beauty more than ever lit up by the brilliancy of her mind.

"Monsieur Tegellier," she said, her words falling upon my ears like a crack of a whip near the head of a horse, "won't you give this person my cigarette case for his inspection?"

"Madame Mallon!" Tegellier burst forth. "I pro-tes'! For your own sake, I——"

"Monsieur!" she cut in sharply. For the first time, there was irresistible command in her voice. "Give him the cigarette case."

Tegellier, frankly astounded, slowly lifted the case from his pocket, and handed it to me. I took it, and, leaning forward against the table so that I would have the strongest possible light upon it, I began to search for the spring which, I knew, would lift up the lining of the wing. I noticed that the case was exactly as it had been when I had examined it before.

Mrs. Mallon put out her hand.

"Perhaps," she said contemptuously, "I'd better show you."

Her fingers touched mine as she took the case. Her flesh was cool. She touched a spring connected with one of the little hinges by which the case opened.

"Now," she said, handing it back to

me, "you may lift up the lining and look."

Before I could take it, she changed her mind, this time for a woman's reason. I divined that she wanted to humiliate me as much as possible. I had outraged her, and her resentment was intense.

"Just a moment," her afterthought stung me. "At least, I need not run the risk of intrusting you with my cigarettes."

She lifted up the gold bar that held them, and let them roll out on the table. Then she gave me the case. I lifted the gold lining, and found the little secret pocket. It could have held only one thickness of very thin paper not more than three inches square, but enough to contain the figures Tegellier wanted. I found no paper there.

The failure swept me off my feet. The structure of my theory fell. There was absolutely nothing to it. The paper had not been there. If it had been, it would have been there then, for neither she nor Tegellier had had the faintest opportunity to remove it or even to look at it. I dropped the empty case to the table, and, literally overwhelmed with mortification, professional mortification, I looked first at her, and then at him.

Both of them were laughing, she out of sheer delight, he with a note of sarcasm in his voice.

"Now?"

For the third time, she made the question big with her hands.

"I—I—it seems that I owe an apology ——" I began.

"Before you apologize," she said, her contempt still vibrant in every word, "listen to me."

She picked up one of the cigarettes, and, walking toward the mantel, lit it at the alcohol lamp which Tegellier held out for her.

"Thanks," she said, and, picking up the other cigarettes, held them out to him. "Take one, won't you?"

She threw the others back to the table, her action obliterating me as a personage to be considered. She blew out a slow whiff of the delicate, perfumed smoke. Tegellier, who had his back partly turned to me as he bent over the alcohol lamp to light his cigarette, was trembling, as some men do after successfully facing a crucial moment. When he straightened up, there was perspiration on his forehead.

"Now listen to me," Mrs. Mallon repeated, turning to me again. "So far as my guilt or innocence in this matter is concerned, you have determined that beyond dispute—determined it after subjecting me to the most outrageous innuendo and accusation. But, as for my wishes—there we strike another note. You know, of course, my origin —my Central American sympathies also. And you have behaved in this extraordinary manner because Peffernitz and the others have told you that I don't like Huave, the president of Guaturas. They are right. I dislike him and his followers. And I would do all I possibly could to give this Carreror concession to the French, to Monsieur Tegellier and his associates, because they would help the revolutionists. I would do anything in my power to bring this about. Do you see?"

Tegellier had been watching her, his black eyes afire with an admiration that was almost awe.

"Why was'e words with zis pairson?" he inquired, ceasing for a moment to inhale and blow out great, long puffs from his cigarette. His bearing, as he asked the question, was a tribute to her, an affront to me.

"Yes," she agreed, her manner softening; "why, indeed?"

By this time I had begun to think again. I had no intention of being thrown off my guard. Tegellier tossed the end of his cigarette into the fire, and turned to Mrs. Mallon with a bow,

which said, in effect, that he was ready to escort her from the room.

"It seems," I said, stubborn in my determination to carry out my duty, "that a grievous mistake has been made. I am sorry for it. I regret it more than I can say. Nevertheless, orders are orders—and I must see to it that you are not allowed to leave here together. As I say, I regret, but I insist."

"I am not a chil'," Tegellier said roughly. "Do not talk to me of interference—of for-ce—of arres'. You have no warran', zere is no pos-see-ble excuse."

"That's true," I said, "but Mrs. Mallon will appreciate that her position, her——"

She saw the point before I could frame it. I have mentioned already that she was wonderful among women.

"Certainly," she said distantly. "Monsieur Tegellier, I thank you for your willingness to go home with me, but I shall go with this—this person."

Mr. Bissell and Miss Niland had taken their departure for the dance, and, after Tegellier had left, Mrs. Mallon and I laughed and talked a few moments with Mrs. Hollofield. As I remember it, the conversation was about a divorcee. When I helped Mrs. Mallon to alight from the taxi in front of her apartment house, I saw one of my men at the corner near by.

When, half an hour later, I was telling the story to Peffernitz, I got as far as the point where Tegellier lit his cigarette at the alcohol lamp. I was interrupted by Peffernitz, whose expression of rapt attention was broken suddenly by a flashlike look of entire comprehension.

"You blockhead Americans!" he thundered, swearing grandly. "There is a liquid with which you can write on white paper and yet not leave a sign of it! Heat, however, will make it visible. Is it not understandable? It can be done very easily—even on the paper of a cigarette held close to an alcohol lamp."

And Tegellier had taken the precaution of smoking up the cigarette.

NAMING THE REDWOOD TREE

THE giant redwood tree, which now grows only in California, is called the sequoia—and this is the reason why:

In the very long ago there once lived a Cherokee Indian named Sequo Yah, who invented an Indian alphabet. He not only invented it, but he taught it to the other Cherokees by writing it out on leaves, and this peculiar form of literature was in general use in that tribe long before the white man knew of it. In 1828 the missionaries adopted it, and utilized it in a magazine which they published for the red men.

Sequo Yah was banished from Alabama with the other members of his tribe, and settled in New Mexico, where he died in 1843.

In 1846, when Endlicher was preparing his synopsis of the cone-bearing trees, he heard of the Indian literary genius, Sequo Yah, and decided to dedicate to his memory the great redwood tree of California. Thus he called it sequoia.

A peculiarity about this tree is that in former years it was found all over the world, but now grows only in California.

M i s s i n g

By E. Phillips Oppenheim

Author of "The Lighted Way," "The Malefactor," Etc.

Next to "The Malefactor" we do not know of any story by E. Phillips Oppenheim that has the cumulative interest of "Missing." We are sorry we can't give you all of it in this number. The central figure—a man who is actually master of the world, a weak man physically, a cripple in a wheel chair, but of enormous mental power—this central figure is so magnetic that you are eager to know the results of his machinations. The complete novel would more than fill any average-sized magazine. We have given you one fourth of the story in this issue of the POPULAR. The rest of it will appear in the issues of May 7th, May 23rd, and June 7th.

(*In Four Parts—Part One*)

CHAPTER I.

THERE were very few people upon Platform No. 21, of Liverpool Street station at a quarter to nine on the evening of April 2d—possibly because the platform in question is one of the most remote and least used in the great terminus. The station master, however, was there himself, with an inspector in attendance. A dark, thickset man, wearing a long traveling ulster, a Homburg hat, and carrying a brown leather dressing case in his hand, across which was painted in black letters the name "Mr. John P. Dunster," was standing a few yards apart, smoking a long cigar, and to all appearance absorbed in studying the advertisements which decorated the grimy wall on the other side of the single track. A couple of porters were seated upon a truck, which contained one solitary bag. There were no signs of other passengers, no other luggage. As a matter of fact, according to the time-table, no train was due to leave or arrive at this particular platform for several hours.

Down at the other end of the platform the gate was thrust back, and a porter, with some luggage upon a truck, made his noisy approach. He was followed by a tall young man in a gray tweed suit and a straw hat, on which were the colors of a famous cricket club. The inspector watched them curiously.

"Lost his way, I should think," he observed.

The station master nodded.

"It looks like the young man who missed the boat train," he remarked. "Perhaps he has come to beg a lift."

The young man in question made steady progress up the platform. His hands were thrust deep into the pockets of his coat, and his forehead was contracted in a frown. As he approached more closely, he singled out Mr. John P. Dunster, and, motioning his porter

to wait, he crossed to the edge of the track and addressed him:

"Can I speak to you for a moment, sir?"

Mr. John P. Dunster turned at once and faced his questioner. He did so without haste—with a certain deliberation, in fact—yet his eyes were suddenly bright and keen. He was neatly dressed, with the quiet precision which seems as a rule to characterize the traveling American. He was apparently of a little less than middle age, clean-shaven, broad-shouldered, with every appearance of physical strength. He seemed like a man on wires, a man on the alert, a man likely to miss nothing.

"Is your name Mr. John P. Dunster?" the youth asked.

"I carry my visiting card in my hand, sir," the other replied, swinging his dressing case round. "My name is John P. Dunster."

The young man's expression was scarcely ingratiating. To a natural sullenness was added now the nervous distaste of one who approaches a disagreeable task.

"I want, if I may, to ask you a favor," he continued. "If you don't feel like granting it, please say No, and I'll be off at once. I am on my way to The Hague. I was to have gone by the boat train, which left half an hour ago. I had taken a seat, and they assured me that the train would not leave for at least ten minutes, as the mails weren't in. I went down the platform to buy some papers, and stood talking for a moment or two with a friend. I suppose I must have been longer than I thought, or they must have been quicker than they expected with the mail bags. Anyhow, when I came back the train was moving. They would not let me jump in. I could have done it easily, but that fool of an inspector over there held me."

"They are very strict in this country, I know," Mr. Dunster agreed, without change of expression. "Please go on."

"I saw you arrive—just too late for the train. While I was swearing at the inspector I heard you speak to the station master. Since then I have made inquiries. I understand that you have ordered a special train to Harwich."

Mr. John P. Dunster said nothing, only his keen, clear eyes seemed all the time to be questioning this gloomy looking but apparently harmless young man.

"I went to the station master's office," the latter continued, "and tried to persuade them to let me ride in the guard's coach of your special, but he made a stupid fuss about it, so I thought I'd better come to you. Can I beg a seat in your compartment, or anywhere in the train, as far as Harwich?"

Mr. Dunster avoided, for the moment, a direct reply. He had the air of a man who, whether reasonably or unreasonably, disliked the request which had been made to him.

"You are particularly anxious to cross to-night?" he asked.

"I am," the youth admitted emphatically. "I never ought to have risked missing the train. I am due at The Hague to-morrow."

Mr. John P. Dunster moved his position a little. The light from a rain-splashed gas lamp shone now full upon the face of his suppliant—a boy's face, which would have been pleasant and even handsome but for the discontented mouth, the lowering forehead, and a shadow in the eyes, as though, boy though he certainly was in years, he had already, at some time or other, looked upon the serious things of life. His nervousness, too, was almost grotesque. He had the air of disliking immensely this asking a favor from a stranger. Mr. Dunster appreciated all these things, but there were reasons which made him slow in granting the young man's request.

"What is the nature of your pressing business at The Hague?" he asked.

The youth hesitated.

"I am afraid," he said grimly, "that you will not think it of much importance. I am on my way to play in a golf tournament there."

"A golf tournament at The Hague," Mr. Dunster repeated, in a slightly altered tone. "What is your name?"

"My name is Gerald Fentolin."

Mr. Dunster stood quite still for a moment. He was possessed of a wonderful memory, and he was conscious at that moment of a subtle appeal to it. Fentolin! There was something in the name which seemed to him associated, somehow, with the things against which he was on guard. He stood, with puzzled frown, reminiscent for several minutes, unsuccessful. Then he suddenly smiled, and, moving underneath the gas lamp, shook open an evening paper which he had been carrying. He turned over the pages until he arrived at the sporting items. Here, on almost the first paragraph, he saw the name which had happened to catch his eye a moment or two before:

GOLF AT THE HAGUE.

Among the entrants for the tournament which commences to-morrow are several well-known English players, including Mr. Barwin, Mr. Parrott, Mr. Hillard, and Mr. Gerald Fentolin.

Mr. Dunster folded up the newspaper and replaced it in his pocket. He turned toward the young man:

"So you're a golfer, are you?"

"I play a bit," was the somewhat indifferent reply.

Mr. Dunster turned to another part of the paper and pointed to the great black headlines.

"Seems a queer thing for a young fellow like you to be worrying about games," he remarked. "I haven't been in this country more than a few hours, but I expected to find all the young men getting ready."

"Getting ready for what?"

"Why, to fight, of course," Mr. Dunster replied. "Seems pretty clear that there's an expeditionary force being fitted out, according to this evening's paper, somewhere up in the North Sea. The only Englishman I've spoken to on this side was willing to lay me odds that war was declared within a week."

The young man's lack of interest was curious.

"I am not in the army," he said. "It really doesn't affect me."

Mr. Dunster stared at him.

"You'll forgive my curiosity," he said, "but say, is there nothing you could get into and fight if this thing came along?"

"Nothing at all, that I know of," the youth replied coolly. "War is an affair which concerns only the military and naval part of two countries. The civil population——"

"Plays golf, I suppose," Mr. Dunster interrupted. "Young man, I haven't been in England for some years, and you rather take my breath away. All the same, you can come along with me as far as Harwich."

The young man showed signs of some satisfaction.

"I am very much obliged to you, sir," he declared. "I promise I won't be in the way."

The station master, who had been looking through a little pile of telegrams brought to him by a clerk from his office, turned now toward him. His expression was a little grave.

"Your special will be backing down shortly, sir," he announced, "but I am sorry to say that we hear very bad accounts of the track. They say that this is only the fag-end of the storm that we are getting here, and that it's been raging for nearly twenty-four hours on the east coast. I doubt whether the Harwich boat will be able to put off."

"We must take our chance about that," Mr. Dunster remarked. "If the

mail boat doesn't run, I presume there will be something else we can charter."

The station master looked the curiosity which he did not actually express in words.

"Money will buy most things nowadays, sir," he observed, "but if it isn't fit for our mail boat, it certainly isn't fit for anything else that can come into Harwich harbor. However, you'll hear what they say when you get there."

Mr. Dunster nodded, and relapsed into a taciturnity which was obviously one of his peculiarities.

The young man strolled down the platform, and, catching up with the inspector, touched him on the shoulder.

"Do you know who the fellow is?" he asked curiously. "It's awfully decent of him to let me go with him, but he didn't seem very keen about it."

The inspector shook his head.

"No, idea, sir," he replied. "He drove up just two minutes after the train had gone, came straight into the office, and ordered a special. Paid for it, too, in Bank of England notes before he went out. I fancy he's an American, and he gave his name as Mr. John P. Dunster."

The young man paused to light a cigarette.

"If he's an American, I suppose that accounts for it," he observed. "He must be in a precious hurry to get somewhere, though."

"A night like this, too!" the inspector remarked, with a shiver. "I wouldn't leave London myself unless I had to. They say there's a tremendous storm blowing on the east coast. Here comes the train, sir—just one private car and the guard's coach."

The little train backed slowly along the platform side. The engine was splashed with mud, and soaking wet. The faces of the engineer and his fireman shone from the dripping rain. The station master held open the door of the car.

"You've a rough journey before you, sir," he said. "You'll catch the boat, all right, though—if it goes. The mail train was very heavy to-night. You should catch her up this side of Colchester."

Mr. John P. Dunster nodded.

"I am taking this young gentleman with me," he announced shortly. "It seems that he, too, missed the train. I am much obliged to you, sir, for your attention. Good night!"

They were about to start, when Mr. Dunster let down the window.

"By the bye," he said, "as it is such a wild night, you will oblige me very much if you will tell the engineer that there will be a five-pound note for himself and his fireman if we catch the mail. Inspector!"

The inspector touched his hat. The station master had turned discreetly away. He had been an inspector himself once, and sovereigns had been useful to him, too. Then the train glided from the platform side, plunged with a scream through a succession of black tunnels, and, with rapidly increasing speed, faced the storm.

CHAPTER II.

The young man sat on one side of the car and Mr. John P. Dunster on the other. Although both of them were provided with magazines and newspapers, neither of them made any pretense at reading. The elder man, with his feet upon the opposite seat and his arms folded, was looking pensively through the rain-splashed windowpane into the impenetrable darkness. The young man, although he could not ignore his companion's unsociable instincts, was fidgety.

"There will be floods to-morrow," he remarked.

Mr. Dunster turned his head and looked across the car. There was something in the deliberate manner of his doing so, and his hesitation before he

spoke, which seemed intended to further impress upon the young man the fact that he was not disposed for conversation.

"Very likely," was his sole reply.

Gerald Fentolin sighed as though he regretted his companion's taciturnity, and strolled, a few minutes later, to the farther end of the car. He spent some time trying to peer through the streaming window into the darkness. He chatted for a few minutes with the guard, who was, however, in a bad temper at having had to turn out, and who found little to say. Then he took one of his golf clubs from the bag and indulged in several half swings. Finally he stretched himself out upon one of the seats and closed his eyes.

"May as well try to get a nap," he yawned. "There won't be much chance on the steamer, if it blows like this."

Mr. Dunster said nothing. His face was set, his eyes were looking somewhere beyond the confines of the car in which he was seated. So they traveled for over an hour. The young man seemed to be dozing in earnest when, with a succession of jerks, the train rapidly slackened speed. Mr. Dunster let down the window. The interior of the car was at once thrown into confusion. A couple of newspapers were caught up and whirled around; a torrent of rain beat in. Mr. Dunster rapidly closed the window and rang the bell. The guard came in after a moment or two's delay. His clothes were shiny from the wet; raindrops hung from his beard.

"What is the matter?" Mr. Dunster demanded. "Why are we waiting here?"

"There's a block somewhere," the man replied. "Can't tell where exactly. The signals are against us—that's all we know at present."

They crawled on again for about ten minutes, stopped, and resumed their progress at even a slower rate. Mr. Dunster once more summoned the guard.

"Why are we traveling like this?" he asked impatiently. "We shall never catch the boat."

"We shall catch the boat all right, if it runs," the man assured him. "The mail is only a mile or two ahead of us—that's one reason why we have to go so slowly. Then, the water is right over the line where we are now, and we can't get any news at all from the other side of Ipswich. If it goes on like this, some of the bridges will be down—that's what I'm afraid of."

Mr. Dunster frowned. For the first time he showed some signs of uneasiness.

"Perhaps," he muttered, half to himself, "a motor car would have been better."

"Not on your life!" his young companion intervened. "All the roads to the coast here cross no end of small bridges—much weaker affairs than the railway bridges. I bet there are some of those down already. Besides, you wouldn't be able to see where you were going a night like this."

"There appears to be a chance," Mr. Dunster remarked dryly, "that you will have to scratch for your competition to-morrow."

"Also," the young man observed, "that you will have taken this special train for nothing. I can't fancy the Harwich boat going out a night like this."

Mr. Dunster relapsed into stony but anxious silence. The train continued its erratic progress, sometimes stopping for a time altogether, with whistle blowing repeatedly; sometimes creeping along the rails as though feeling its way to safety. At last, after a somewhat prolonged wait, the guard, whose hoarse voice they had heard on the platform of the small station in which they were standing, entered the car. With him came a gust of wind, sending once

more the papers flying around the compartment. The rain dripped from his clothes onto the carpet. He had lost his hat, his hair was tossed with the wind, his face was bleeding from a slight wound on the temple.

"The boat train's just ahead of us," he announced. "She can't get on any better than we can. We've just heard that there's a bridge down on the line between Ipswich and Harwich."

"What are we going to do, then?" Mr. Dunster demanded.

"That's just what I've come to ask you," the guard replied. "The mail's going slowly on as far as Ipswich. I fancy they'll lie by there until the morning. The best thing that I can see is, if you're agreeable, to take you back to London. We can very likely do that all right, if we start at once."

Mr. Dunster, ignoring the man's suggestion, drew from one of the voluminous pockets of his ulster a small map. He spread it open upon the table before him, and studied it attentively.

"If I cannot get to Harwich," he asked, "is there any possibility of keeping straight on and reaching Yarmouth?"

The guard hesitated.

"We haven't heard anything about the track from Ipswich to Norwich," he replied, "but we can't very well change our course without definite instructions."

"Your definite instructions," Mr. Dunster reminded him dryly, "were to take me to Harwich. You have been forced to depart from them. I see no harm in your adopting any suggestions I may have to make concerning our altered destination. I will pay the extra mileage naturally."

"How far did you wish to go?" asked the guard.

"To Yarmouth," Mr. Dunster replied firmly. "If there are bridges down, and communication with Harwich is blocked, Yarmouth would suit me better than anywhere."

The guard shook his head.

"I couldn't go that way without instructions."

"Is there a telegraph office at this station?" Mr. Dunster inquired.

"We can speak anywhere on the line," the guard replied.

"Then wire to the station-master at Liverpool Street," Mr. Dunster instructed. "You can get a reply from him in the course of a few minutes. Explain the situation, and tell him what my wishes are."

The guard hesitated.

"It's a goodish way from here to Norwich," he observed, "and for all we know——"

"When we left Liverpool Street station," Mr. Dunster interrupted, "I promised five pounds each to you, the engineer, and his mate. That five pounds shall be made twenty-five if you succeed in getting me to the coast. Do your best for me."

The guard raised his hat, and departed without another word.

"It will probably suit you better," Mr. Dunster continued, turning to his companion, "to leave me at Ipswich, and join the mail."

The latter shook his head.

"I don't see that there's any chance, anyway, of my getting over in time now," he remarked. "If you'll take me on with you as far as Norwich, I can go quietly home from there."

"You live in this part of the world, then?" Mr. Dunster asked.

The young man assented. Again there was a certain amount of hesitation in his manner.

"I live some distance the other side of Norwich," he said. "I don't want to sponge on you too much," he went on, "but if you're really going to stick it out and try and get there, I'd like to go on, too. I am afraid I can't offer to share the expense, but I'd work my

passage if there was anything to be done."

Mr. Dunster drummed for a moment upon the table with his fingers. All the time the young man had been speaking, his eyes had been studying his face. He turned now once more to his map.

"It was my idea," he said, "to hire a steam trawler from Yarmouth. If I do so, you can, if you wish, accompany me so far as the port at which we may land in Holland. On the other hand, to be perfectly frank with you, I should prefer to go alone. There will be, no doubt, a certain amount of risk in crossing to-night. My own business is of importance. A golf tournament, however, is scarcely worth risking your life for, is it?"

"Oh, I don't know about that!" the young man replied grimly. "I fancy I should rather like it. Let's see whether we can get on to Norwich, anyhow, shall we? We may find that there are bridges down on that line."

They relapsed once more into silence. Presently the guard reappeared.

"Instructions to take you on to Yarmouth, if possible, sir," he announced, "and to collect the mileage at our destination."

"That will be quite satisfactory," Mr. Dunster agreed. "Let us be off, then, as soon as possible."

Presently they crawled on. They passed the boat train in Ipswich station, where they stayed for a few moments. Mr. Dunster bought wine and sandwiches, and his companion followed his example. Then they continued their journey. An hour or more passed. The storm showed no signs of abatement. Their speed now rarely exceeded ten or fifteen miles an hour. Mr. Dunster smoked all the time, occasionally rubbing the windowpane, and trying to look out. Gerald Fentolin slept fitfully.

"Have you any idea where we are?" Mr. Dunster asked once.

The boy cautiously let down the window a little way. With the noise of the storm came another sound, to which, for a moment, he listened with puzzled face—a dull, rumbling sound, like the falling of water. He closed the window, breathless.

"I don't think we are far from Norwich. We passed Forncett, anyhow, some time ago."

"Still raining?"

"In torrents! I can't see a yard ahead of me. I bet we get some floods after this. I expect they are out now, if one could only see."

They crept on. Suddenly above the storm they heard what sounded at first like the booming of a gun, and then a shrill whistle from some distance ahead. They felt the jerk as their brakes were hastily applied, the swaying of the little train, and then the crunching of earth beneath them, the roar of escaping steam, as their engine plowed its way on into the roadbed.

"Off the rails!" the boy cried, springing to his feet. "Hold on tightly, sir. I'd keep away from the window."

The car swayed and rocked. Suddenly a telegraph post seemed to come crashing through the window and polished mahogany panels. The young man escaped it by leaping to one side. It caught Mr. Dunster, who had just risen to his feet, upon the forehead. There was a crash all round of splitting glass, a further shock. They were both now thrown off their feet. The light was suddenly extinguished. With the crashing of glass, the splitting of timber—a hideous, tearing sound—the wrecked car, dragging the engine halfway over with it, slipped down a low embankment, and lay on its side, what remained of it, in a field of turnips.

CHAPTER III.

The young man, as he staggered to his feet, had somehow a sense of detachment, as though he were commenc-

ing a new life, or had suddenly come into a new existence. Yet his immediate surroundings were charged with ugly reminiscences. Through a great gap in the ruined side of the car the rain was tearing in. His head, as he stood up, caught the fragment of the roof. He was able with ease to push back the wreckage and step out. For a moment he reeled as he met the violence of the storm. Then, clutching hold of the side of the wreck, he steadied himself. A light was moving backward and forward, close at hand. He cried out weakly:

"Hello!"

A man, carrying a lantern, bent double, as he made his way against the wind, crawled up to them. He was a porter from the station, close at hand.

"Heaven save us!" he exclaimed. "Any one alive here?"

"I'm all right," Gerald muttered—"at least, I suppose I am. What's it all—what's it all about? We've had an accident."

The porter caught hold of a piece of the wreckage with which to steady himself.

"Your train ran right into three feet of water," he answered. "The rails had gone—torn up. The telegraph line's down."

"Why didn't you stop the train?"

"We were doing all we could," the man retorted gloomily. "We weren't expecting anything else through tonight. We'd a man along the line with a lantern, but he's just been found blown over the embankment, with his head in a pool of water. Any one else in your carriage?"

"One gentleman traveling with me," Gerald answered. "We'd better try to get him out. What about the guard and engine driver?"

"The engine driver and stoker are both alive," the porter told him. "I come across them before I saw you. They're both knocked sort of sillylike, but they aren't much hurt. The guard's stone-dead."

"Where are we?"

"A few hundred yards from Wymondham. Let's have a look for the other gentleman."

Mr. John P. Dunster was lying quite still, his right leg doubled up, and a huge block of telegraph post, which the car had carried on with it in its fall, still pressing against his forehead. He groaned as they dragged him out and laid him down upon a cushion in the shelter of the wreckage.

"He's alive all right," the porter remarked. "There's a doctor on the way. Let's cover him up quick and wait."

"Can't we carry him to shelter of some sort?" Gerald proposed.

The man shook his head. Speech of any sort was difficult. Even with his lips close to the other's ears, he had almost to shout.

"Couldn't be done," he replied. "It's all one can do to walk alone when you get out in the middle of the field, away from the shelter of the embankment here. There's bits of trees flying all down the lane. Never was such a night! Folks is fair afraid of the morning to see what's happened. There's a mill blown right over on its side in the next field, and the man in charge of it lying dead. This poor chap's bad enough."

Gerald, on all fours, had crept back into the car. The bottle of wine was smashed into atoms. He came out, dragging the small dressing case, which his companion had kept on the table before him. One side of it was dented in, but the lock, which was of great strength, still held.

"Perhaps there's a flask somewhere in this dressing case," Gerald said "Lend me a knife."

Strong though it had been, the lock was already almost torn out from its foundation. They forced the spring, and opened it. The porter turned his

lantern on the widening space. Gerald was raising the lid very slowly to save the contents from being scattered by the wind. Just at that moment the man turned his head to answer an approaching hail. Gerald raised the lid a little higher, and suddenly closed it with a bang.

"There's folks coming at last!" the porter exclaimed, turning around excitedly. "They've been a time, and no mistake. The village isn't a quarter of a mile away. Did you find a flask, sir?"

Gerald made no answer. The dressing case once more was closed, and his hand pressed upon the lid. The porter turned the light upon his face and whistled softly.

"You're about done yourself, sir," he remarked. "Hold up."

He caught the young man in his arms. There was another roar in Gerald's ears besides the roar of the wind. He had never fainted in his life, but the feeling was upon him now—a deadly sickness, a swaying of the earth. The porter suddenly gave a little cry.

"If I'm not a born idiot!" he exclaimed, drawing a bottle from the pocket of his coat, with his disengaged hand. "There's whisky here. I was taking it home to the missis for her rheumatism. Now, then."

He drew the cork from the bottle with his teeth, and forced some of the liquid between the lips of the young man. The voices now were coming nearer and nearer. Gerald made a desperate effort.

"I am all right," he declared. "Let's look after him."

They groped their way toward the unconscious man, Gerald still gripping the dressing case with both hands. There were no signs of any change in his condition, but he was still breathing heavily. Then they heard a shout behind, almost in their ears. The porter staggered to his feet.

"It's all right now, sir!" he exclaimed. "They've brought blankets and a stretcher and brandy. Here's a doctor, sir."

A powerful-looking man, hatless, and wrapped in a great ulster, moved toward them.

"How many are there of you?" he asked, as he bent over Mr. Dunster.

"Only we two," Gerald replied. "Is my friend badly hurt?"

"Concussion," the doctor announced. "We'll take him to the village. What about you, young man? Your face is bleeding, I see."

"Just a cut," Gerald faltered—"nothing else."

"Lucky chap," the doctor remarked. "Let's get him to shelter of some sort. Come along. There's an inn at the corner of the lane there."

They all staggered along, Gerald still clutching the dressing case, and supported on the other side by an excited and somewhat incoherent villager.

"Such a storm as never was," the latter volunteered. "The telegraph wires are all down for miles and miles. There won't be no trains running along this line come many a week, and as for trees—why, it's as though some one had been playing ninepins in Squire Fellowes' park. When the morning do come, for sure there will be things to be seen. This way, sir. Be careful of the gate."

They staggered along down the lane, climbing once over a tree which lay across the lane, and far into the adjoining field. Soon they were joined by more of the villagers, roused from their beds by rumors of terrible happenings. The little single-story, ivy-covered inn was all aglow, and the door held firmly open. They passed through the narrow entrance, and into the stone-flagged barroom. The men laid down their stretcher. As many of the villagers as could crowd in filled the passage. Gerald sank into a chair. The

sudden absence of wind was almost disconcerting. He felt himself once more in danger of fainting. He was only vaguely conscious of drinking hot milk, poured from a jug by a red-faced and sympathetic woman. Its restorative effect, however, was immediate and wonderful. The mist cleared from before his eyes, his brain began to work. Always in the background the horror and the shame were there, the shame which kept his hand pressed with unnatural strength upon the broken lock of that dressing case. He sat a little apart from the others, and listened. Above the confused murmur of voices he could hear the doctor's comment and brief orders as he rose to his feet after examining the unconscious man.

"An ordinary concussion," he declared. "I must get round and see the engine driver now. They have got him in a shed by the embankment. I'll call in again later on. Let's have one more look at you, young man."

He glanced at the cut on Gerald's forehead, noted the access of color in his cheeks, and nodded.

"Born to be hanged, you were," he pronounced. "You've had a marvelous escape. I'll be in again presently. No need to worry about your friend. He looks as though he'd got a mighty constitution. Light my lantern, Brown. Two of you had better come with me to the shed. It's no night for a man to be wandering about alone."

He departed, and many of the villagers with him. The landlady sat down and began to weep.

"Such a night! Such a night!" she exclaimed, wringing her hands. "And there's the doctor talks about putting the poor gentleman to bed! Why, the roof's off the back part of the house, and not a bedroom in the place but mine and John's, and the rain coming in there in torrents. Such a night! It's the judgment of the Lord upon us! That's what it is—the judgment of the Lord!"

"Judgment of the fiddlesticks!" her husband growled. "Can't you light the fire, woman? What's the good of sitting there, whining?"

"Light the fire," she repeated bitterly, "and the chimney lying out in the road! Do you want to suffocate us all, or is the beer still in your head? It's your evil doings, Richard Budden, and others like you, that have brought this upon us. If Mr. Wembley would but come in and pray!"

Her husband scoffed. He was dressed only in his shirt and trousers, his hair rough, his suspenders hanging down behind.

"Come in and pray!" he repeated. "Not he! Not Mr. Wembley! He's safe tucked up in his bed, shivering with fear, I'll bet you. He's not getting his feet wet to save a body or lend a hand here. Souls are his job. You let the preacher alone, mother, and tell us what we're going to do with this gentleman."

"The Lord only knows!" she cried, wringing her hands.

"Can I hire a motor car from anywhere near?" Gerald asked.

"There's motor cars, right enough," the innkeeper replied. "but not many as would be fools enough to take one out. You couldn't se the road, and I doubt if one of them plaguey things would stir in this storm."

"Such nonsense as you talk, Richard Budden!" his wife exclaimed sharply. "It's twenty minutes past three of the clock, and there's light coming on us fast. If so be as the young gentleman knows folks round about here, or happens to live nigh, why shouldn't he take one of them motor cars and get away to some decent place? It'll be better for the poor gentleman than lying here in a house smitten by the Lord."

Gerald rose stiffly to his feet. An idea was forming in his brain. His

eyes were bright. He looked at the body of John Dunster upon the floor, and felt once more in his pocket.

"How far off is the garage?" he asked.

"It's right across the way," the innkeeper replied, "a speculation of Neighbor Martin's, and a foolish one, it do seem to me. He's two cars there, and one he lets to the government for delivering the mails."

Gerald felt in his pocket and produced a sovereign.

"Give this," he said, "to any man you can find who will go across there and bring me a car—the most powerful they've got, if there's any difference. Tell them I'll pay well. This—my friend will be much better at home with me than in a strange place when he comes to his senses."

"It's sound common sense," the woman declared. "Be off with you, Richard."

The man was looking at the coin covetously, but his wife pushed him away.

"It's not a sovereign you'll be taking from the gentleman for a little errand like that," she insisted sharply. "He shall pay us for what he's had when he goes, and welcome, and if so be that he's willing to make it a sovereign, to include the milk, and the brandy, and the confusion we've been put to this night, well and good. It's a heavy reckoning, maybe, but the night calls for it. We'll see about that afterward. Get along with you, I say, Richard."

"I'll be wet through," the man muttered.

"And serve you right!" the woman exclaimed. "If there's a man in this village to-night whose clothes are dry, it's a thing for him to be ashamed of."

The innkeeper reluctantly departed. They heard the roar of the wind as the door was opened and closed. The woman poured out another glass of milk, and brought it to Gerald.

"A godless man, mine," she said grimly. "If so happen as Mr. Wembley had come to these parts years ago, I'd have seen myself in my grave before I'd have married a publican. But it's too late now. We're mostly too late about the things that count in this world. So it's your friend that's been stricken down, young man. A well-living man, I hope?"

Gerald shivered ever so slightly. He drank the milk, however. He felt that he might need his strength.

"What train might you have been on?" the woman continued. "There's none due on this line that we knew of. David Bass, the station master, was here but two hours ago, and said he'd finished for the night, and praised the Lord for that. The freight trains had all been stopped at Ipswich, and the first passenger train was not due till six o'clock."

Gerald shook his head with an affectation of weariness.

"I don't know," he replied. "I don't remember anything about it. We were hours late, I think."

The woman was looking down at the unconscious man. Gerald rose slowly to his feet, and stood by her side. The face of Mr. John P. Dunster, even in unconsciousness, had something in it of strength and purpose. The shape of his head, the squareness of his jaws, the straightness of his thick lips, all seemed to speak of a hard and inflexible disposition. His hair was coal black, coarse, and without the slightest sprinkling of gray. He had the neck and throat of a fighter. But for that single, livid blue mark across his forehead, he carried with him no signs of his accident. He was a little inclined to be stout. There was a heavy gold chain stretched across his waistcoat. From where he lay, the shining handle of his revolver protruded from his hip pocket.

"Sakes alive!" the woman muttered,

as she looked down. "What does he carry a thing like that for—in a peaceful country, too!"

"It was just an idea of his," Gerald answered. "We were going abroad in a day or two. He was always nervous. If you like, I'll take it away."

He stooped down and withdrew it from the unconscious man's pocket. He started as he discovered that it was loaded in every chamber.

"I can't bear the sight of them things," the woman declared. "It's the men of evil ways, who've no trust in the Lord, who need that sort of protection."

They heard the door pushed open, the howl of wind down the passage, and the beating of rain upon the stone flags. Then it was softly closed again. The landlord staggered into the room, followed by a young man.

"This 'ere is Mr. Martin's chaffer," he announced. "You can tell him what you want yerself."

Gerald turned almost eagerly toward the newcomer.

"I want to go the other side of Holt," he said, "and get my friend—get this gentleman away from here—get him home, if possible. Can you take me?"

The chauffeur looked doubtful.

"I'm afraid of the roads, sir," he replied. "There's talk about many bridges down, and trees, and there's floods out everywhere. There's half a foot of water, even, across the village street now. I'm afraid we shouldn't get very far."

"Look here," Gerald begged eagerly, "let's make a shot at it. I'll pay you double the hire of the car, and I'll be responsible for any damage. I want to get out of this beastly place. Let's get somewhere, at any rate, toward a civilized country. I'll see you don't lose anything. I'll give you a five-pound note for yourself if we get as far as Holt."

"I'm on," the young man agreed shortly. "It's an open car, you know."

"It doesn't matter," Gerald replied. "I can stick it in front with you, and we can cover—him up in the tonneau."

"You'll wait until the doctor comes back?" the landlord asked.

"And why should they?" his wife interposed sharply. "Them doctors are all the same. He'll try and keep the poor gentleman here for the sake of a few extra guineas, and a miserable place for him to open his eyes upon, even if the rest of the roof holds, which, for my part, I'm beginning to doubt. They'd have to move him from here with the daylight, anyhow. He can't lie in the bar parlor all day, can he?"

"It don't seem right, somehow," the man complained doggedly. "The doctor didn't say anything about having him moved."

"You get the car," Gerald ordered the young man. "I'll take the whole responsibility."

The chauffeur silently left the room. Gerald put a couple of sovereigns upon the mantelpiece.

"My friend is a man of somewhat peculiar temperament," he said quietly. "If he finds himself at home in a comfortable room when he comes to his senses, I am quite sure that he will have a better chance of recovery. He cannot possibly be made comfortable here, and he will feel the shock of what has happened all the more if he finds himself still in the neighborhood when he opens his eyes. If there is any change in his condition we can easily stop somewhere on the way."

The woman pocketed the two sovereigns.

"That's common sense, sir," she agreed heartily, "and I'm sure we are very much obliged to you. If we had a decent room, and a roof above it, you'd be heartily welcome, but as it is, this is no place for a sick man, and those

that say different don't know what they are talking about. That's a real careful young man who's going to take you along in the motor car. He'll get you there safe, if any one will."

"What I say is," her husband protested sullenly, "that we ought to wait for the doctor's orders. I'm against seeing a poor body like that jolted across the country in an open motor car, in his state. I'm not sure that it's for his good."

"And what business is it of yours, I should like to know?" the woman demanded sharply. "You get upstairs and begin moving the furniture from where the rain's coming sopping in. And if so be you can remember while you do it that this is a judgment that's come upon us, why so much the better. We are evildoers, all of us, though them as likes the easy ways generally manage to forget it."

The man retreated silently. The woman sat down upon a stool and waited. Gerald sat opposite to her, the battered dressing case upon his knees. Between them was stretched the body of the unconscious man.

"Are you used to prayer, young sir?" the woman asked.

Gerald shook his head, and the woman did not pursue the subject. Only once her eyes were half closed, and her words drifted across the room:

"The Lord have mercy on this man, a sinner!"

CHAPTER IV.

"My advice to you, sir, is to chuck it!"

Gerald turned toward the chauffeur by whose side he was seated, a little stiffly, for his limbs were numbed with the cold and exhaustion. The morning had broken with a gray and uncertain light. A vaporous veil of mist seemed to have taken the place of the darkness. Even from the top of the hill, where the car had come to a standstill, there was little to be seen.

"We must have come forty miles already," the chauffeur continued, "what with going out of our way all the time because of the broken bridges. I'm pretty well frozen through, and as for him," he added, jerking his thumb across his shoulder, "it seems to me you're taking a bit of a risk."

"The doctor said he would remain in exactly the same condition for twenty-four hours," Gerald declared.

"Yes, but he didn't say anything about shaking him up over forty miles of rough road," the other protested. "You'll excuse me, sir," he continued, in a slightly changed tone, "it isn't my business, of course, but I'm fairly done. It don't seem reasonable to stick at it like this. There's Holt village not a mile away, and a comfortable inn, and a fire waiting. I thought that was as far as you wanted to come. We might lie up there for a few houfs, at any rate."

His passenger slipped down from his place, and, lifting the rug, peered into the tonneau of the car, over which they had tied a hood. To all appearance, the condition of the man who lay there was unchanged. There was a slightly added blueness about the lips, but his breathing was still perceptible. It seemed even a little stronger. Gerald resumed his seat.

"It isn't worth while to stay at Holt," he said quietly. "We are scarcely seven miles from home now. Sit still for a few minutes and get your wind."

"Only seven miles," the chauffeur repeated more cheerfully. "That's something, anyway."

"And all downhill."

"Toward the sea, then?"

"Straight to the sea," Gerald told him. "The place we are making for is St. David's Hall, near Salthouse."

The chauffeur seemed a little startled.

"Why, that's Squire Fentolin's house!"

Gerald nodded.

"That is where we are going. You follow this road almost straight ahead."

The chauffeur slipped in the clutch.

"Oh, I know the way now, sir, right enough!" he exclaimed. "There's Salthouse Marsh to cross, though. I don't know about that."

"We shall manage that all right," Gerald declared. "We've more light now, too."

They both looked around. During the last few minutes the late morning seemed to have forced its way through the clouds. They had a dim, phantasmagoric view of the stricken country—a watery plain, with here and there great patches of fields, submerged to the hedges, and houses standing out amid the waste of waters like toy dwellings. There were whole plantations of uprooted trees. Close to the road, on their left, was a roofless house, and a family of children crying underneath a tarpaulin shelter. As they crept on, the wind came to them with a brackish flavor, salt with the sea. The chauffeur was gazing ahead doubtfully.

"I don't like the look of the marsh," he grumbled. "Can't see any road at all. However, here goes."

"Another half hour," Gerald assured him encouragingly, "and we shall be at St. David's Hall. You can have as much rest as you like, then."

They were facing the wind now, and conversation became impossible. Twice they had to pull up sharp and make a considerable detour, once on account of a fallen tree, which blocked the road, and another time because of a yawning gap, where a bridge had fallen away. Gerald, however, knew every inch of the country they were in, and was able to give the necessary directions. They began to meet farm wagons now, full of people, who had been driven from their homes. Warnings and information as to the state of the roads were shouted to them continually. Presently they came to the last steep descent, and emerged from the devastated fragment of a wood almost on to the sea level. The chauffeur clapped on his brakes, and stopped short.

"Here's more trouble!" he exclaimed.

Gerald for a moment was speechless. They seemed to have come suddenly upon a huge plain of waters, an immense lake reaching as far as they could see on either side. The road before them stretched like a ribbon for the next three miles. Here and there it disappeared and reappeared again. In many places it was lapped by little waves. Everywhere the hedges were either altogether or half under water. In the distance was one farmhouse only the roof of which was visible, and from which the inhabitants were clambering into a boat. And beyond, with scarcely a single break save for the rising of one strangely shaped hill, was the sea. Gerald pointed with his finger.

"There's St. David's Hall," he said, "on the other side of the hill. The road seems all right."

"Does it?" the chauffeur grunted. "It's under water more than half the way, and Heaven knows how deep it is at the sides! I'm not going to risk my life along there. I am going to take the car back to Holt."

His hand was already upon the reverse lever, but Gerald gripped it.

"Look here," he protested, "we haven't come all this way to turn back. You don't look like a coward."

"I am not a coward, sir," was the quiet answer. "Neither am I a fool. I don't see any use in risking our lives and my master's motor car, because you want to get home."

"Naturally," Gerald answered calmly, "but remember this: I am responsible for your car—not you. Mr. Fentolin is my uncle."

The chauffeur nodded shortly.

"You're Mr. Gerald Fentolin, aren't you, sir?" he remarked. "I thought I recognized you."

"I am," Gerald admitted. "We've had a rough journey, but it doesn't seem sense to turn back now, does it, with the house in sight?"

"That's all very well, sir," the chauffeur objected doubtfully, "but I don't believe the road's even passable, and the floods seem to me to be rising."

"Try it," the young man begged. "Look here. I don't want to bribe you, or anything of that sort. You know you're coming out of this well. It's a serious matter for me, and I shan't be likely to forget it. I want to take this gentleman to St. David's Hall, and not to a hospital. You've brought me here so far like a man. Let's go through with it. If the worst comes to the worst, we can both swim, I suppose, and we are not likely to get out of our depth."

The chauffeur moved his head backward.

"How about him?"

"He must take his chance," Gerald replied. "He's all right where he is. The car won't upset, and there are plenty of people who'll see if we get into trouble. Come, let's make a dash for it."

The chauffeur thrust in his clutch, and settled himself down. They glided off along that winding stretch of road. To its very edge, on either side of them, so close that they could almost touch it, came the water, water which stretched as far as they could see, swaying, waveless, sinister looking. Even Gerald, after his first impulse of wonder, kept his eyes averted and fixed upon the road ahead. Soon they reached a place where the water met in front. There were only the rows of white palings on either side to guide them. The chauffeur muttered to himself as he changed to his first speed.

"If the engine gets stopped," he said, "I don't know how we shall get out of this."

They emerged on the other side. For some time they had a clear run. Then suddenly the driver clapped on his brakes.

"We can't get through that!" he cried.

In front of them for more than a hundred yards the water seemed suddenly to have flowed across the road. Still a mile distant, perched on a ridge of that strangely placed hill, was their destination.

"It can't be done, sir!" the man groaned. "There isn't a car ever built could get through that. See, it's up to almost the top of those posts. I must put her in the reverse, and get back, even if we have to wait on the higher part of the road for a boat."

He glanced behind, and a second cry broke from his lips. Gerald stood up in his place. Already the road which had been clear a few minutes before was hidden. The water was washing almost over the tops of the white posts behind them. Little waves were breaking against the summit of the raised bank.

"We're cut off!" the chauffeur exclaimed. "What a fool I was to try this! There's the tide coming in as well!"

Gerald sat down in his place.

"Look here," he said, "we can't go back, whether we want to or not. It's much worse behind there than it is in front. There's only one chance. Go for it straight ahead in your first speed. It may not stop the engine. In any case, it will be worse presently. There's no use funking it. If the worst happens, we can sit in the car. The water won't be above our heads, and there are some boats about. Blow your horn first well, in case there's any one within hearing, and then go for it."

The chauffeur obeyed. They hissed and sputtered into the water. Soon all

trace of the road was completely lost. They steered only by the tops of the white posts.

"It's getting deeper," the man declared. "It's within an inch or two of the bonnet now. Hold on."

A wave broke almost over them, but the engine continued its beat.

"If we stop now," he gasped, "we're done!"

The engine began to knock.

"Stick to it," Gerald cried, rising in his place a little. "Look, there's only one post lower than the last one that we passed. They get higher all the time ahead. You can almost see the road in front there. Now in with your gear again, and stick at it."

Another wave broke this time completely over them. They listened with strained ears—the engine continued to beat. They still moved slowly. Then there was a shock. The wheel had struck something in the road—a great stone or a rock. The chauffeur thrust the car out of gear. The engine still beat. Gerald leaped from the car. The water was over his knees. He crossed in front of the bonnet and stooped down.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed, tugging hard. "It's a stone."

He moved it, rolled it on one side, and pushed at the wheel of the car as his companion put in the first speed. They started again. He jumped back into his place.

"We've done it, all right!" he cried. "Don't you see? It's getting lower all the time."

The chauffeur had lost his nerve. His cheeks were pale, his teeth were chattering. The engine, however, was still beating. Gradually the pressure of the water grew less. In front of them they caught a glimpse of the road. They drew up at the top of a little bridge over one of the dikes. Gerald uttered a brief exclamation of triumph.

"We're safe!" he almost sobbed. "There's the road, straight ahead and round to the right. There's no more water anywhere near."

They had left the main part of the flood behind them. There were still great pools in the side of the road, and huge masses of seaweed had been brought up and were lying in their track. There was no more water, however. At every moment they drew nearer to the strangely shaped hill with its crown of trees.

"The house is on the other side," Gerald pointed out. "We can go through the lodge gates at the back here. The ascent isn't so steep."

They turned sharply to the right along another stretch of straight road set with white posts, ending before a red brick lodge and a closed gate. They sounded the horn, and a gardener came out. He gazed at them in amazement.

"It's all right," Gerald cried. "Let us through quickly, Foulds. We've a sick man with us."

The gardener swung open the gate with a respectful salute. They made their way up a winding drive of considerable length, and at last they came to a broad open space almost like a platform. On their left were the marshes, and beyond, the sea. Along their right stretched the long front of an Elizabethan mansion. They drew up in front of the hall door. Their coming had been observed, and servants were already waiting. Gerald sprang to the ground.

"There's a gentleman in the tonneau who's ill," he explained to the butler. "He has met with an accident on the way. Three or four of you had better carry him up to a bedroom—any one that is ready. And you, George," he added, turning to a boy, "get into the car and show this man the way round to the garage, and then take him to the servants' hall."

Several of the servants hastened to do his bidding, and Gerald did his best

to answer the eager but respectful stream of questions. And then, just as they were in the act of lifting the still-unconscious man on to the floor of the hall, came a queer sound—a shrill, reverberating whistle. They all looked up the stairs.

"The master is awake," Henderson, the butler, remarked, dropping his voice a little.

Gerald nodded.

"I will go to him at once," he said.

CHAPTER V.

Accustomed though he was to the sight which he was about to face, Gerald shivered slightly as he opened the door of Mr. Fentolin's room. A strange sort of fear seemed to have crept into his bearing and expression, a fear of which there had been no traces whatever during those terrible hours through which he had passed—not even during that last reckless journey across the marshes. He walked with hesitating footsteps across the spacious and lofty room. He had the air of some frightened creature approaching his master. Yet all that was visible of the despot who ruled his whole household in deadly fear was the kindly and beautiful face of an elderly man, whose stunted limbs and body were mercifully concealed. He sat in a little carriage, with a rug drawn closely across his chest and up to his armpits. His beautifully shaped hands were exposed, and his face; nothing else. His hair was a silvery white; his complexion parchmentlike, pallid, entirely colorless. His eyes were a soft shade of blue. His features were so finely cut and chiseled that they resembled some exquisite piece of statuary. He smiled as his nephew came slowly toward him. One might almost have fancied that the young man's abject state was a source of pleasure to him.

"So you are back again, my dear Gerald. A pleasant surprise, indeed, but what is the meaning of it? And what of my little commission, eh?"

The young man's face was dark and sullen. He spoke quickly, but without any sign of eagerness or interest in the information he vouchsafed.

"The storm has stopped all the trains," he said. "The boat did not cross last night, and in any case I couldn't have reached Harwich. As for your commission, I traveled down from London alone with the man you told me to spy upon. I could have stolen anything he had if I had been used to the work. As it was—I brought the man himself."

Mr. Fentolin's delicate fingers played with the handle of his chair. The smile had passed from his lips. He looked at his nephew in gentle bewilderment.

"My dear boy," he protested, "come, come, be careful what you are saying. You have brought the man himself! So far as my information goes, Mr. John P. Dunster is charged with a very important diplomatic commission. He is on his way to Cologne, and from what I know about the man, I think that it would require more than your persuasions to induce him to break off his journey. You do not really wish me to believe that you have brought him here as a guest?"

"I was at Liverpool Street station last night," Gerald declared. "I had no idea how to accost him, and, as to stealing any of his belongings, I couldn't have done it. You must hear how fortune helped me, though. Mr. Dunster missed the train. So did I—purposely. He ordered a special. I asked permission to travel with him. I told him a lie as to how I had missed the train. I hated it, but it was necessary."

Mr. Fentolin nodded approvingly.

"My dear boy," he said, "to trifle

with the truth is always unpleasant. Besides, you are a Fentolin, and our love of truth is proverbial. But there are times, you know, when for the good of others we must sacrifice our scruples. So you told Mr. Dunster a falsehood."

"He let me travel with him," Gerald continued. "We were all night getting about halfway here. Then—you know about the storm, I suppose?"

Mr. Fentolin spread out his hands.

"Could one avoid the knowledge of it?" he asked. "Such a sight has never been seen."

"We found we couldn't get to Harwich," Gerald went on. "They telegraphed to London, and got permission to bring us to Yarmouth. We were on our way to Norwich, and the train ran off the line."

"An accident?" Mr. Fentolin exclaimed.

Gerald nodded.

"Our train ran off the line and pitched down an embankment. Mr. Dunster has concussion of the brain. He and I were taken to a miserable little inn near Wymondham. From there I hired a motor car and brought him here."

"You hired a motor car and brought him here," Mr. Fentolin repeated softly. "My dear boy—forgive me if I find this a little hard to understand. You say that you have brought him here. Had he nothing to say about it?"

"He was unconscious when we picked him up," Gerald explained. "He is unconscious now. The doctor said he would remain so for at least twenty-four hours, and it didn't seem to me that the journey would do him any particular harm. The roof had been stripped off the inn where we were, and the place was quite uninhabitable, so we should have had to have moved him somewhere. We put him in the tonneau of the car, and covered him up. They have carried him now into a bedroom. Doctor Sarson is looking after him."

Mr. Fentolin sat quite silent. His eyes blinked once or twice. There was a curious curve about his lips.

"You have done well, my boy," he pronounced slowly. "Your scheme of bringing him here sounds a little primitive, but success justifies everything."

Mr. Fentolin raised to his lips and blew softly a little gold whistle, which hung from a chain attached to his waistcoat. Almost immediately the door opened. A man entered, dressed somberly in black, whose bearing and demeanor alike denoted the servant, but whose physique was the physique of a prize fighter. He was scarcely more than five feet six in height, but his shoulders were extraordinarily broad. He had a short, bull neck, and long, mighty arms. His face, with the heavy jaw and small eyes, was the face of the typical fighting man, yet his features seemed to have become disposed by habit into an expression of gentle, almost servilelike civility.

"Meekins," Mr. Fentolin said, "a visitor has arrived. Do you happen to have noticed what luggage he brought?"

"There is one small dressing case, sir," the man replied; "nothing else that I have seen."

"That is all we brought," Gerald interposed.

"You will bring the dressing case here at once," Mr. Fentolin directed, "and also my compliments to Doctor Sarson, and any pocketbook or papers which may help us to send a message to the gentleman's friends."

Meekins closed the door, and departed. Mr. Fentolin turned back toward his nephew.

"My dear boy," he said, "tell me why you look as though there were ghosts flitting about the room? You are not ill, I trust?"

"Tired, perhaps," Gerald answered

shortly. "We were many hours in the car. I have had no sleep."

Mr. Fentolin's face was full of kindly sympathy.

"My dear fellow," he exclaimed, "I am selfish, indeed! I should not have kept you here for a moment. You had better go and lie down."

"I'll go directly," Gerald promised. "Can I speak to you for one moment first?"

"Speak to me?" Mr. Fentolin repeated, a little wonderingly. "My dear Gerald, is there ever a moment when I am not wholly at your service?"

"That fellow Dunster, on the platform, the first moment I spoke to him, made me feel like a cur," the boy said, with a sudden access of vigor in his tone. "I told him I was on my way to a golf tournament, and he pointed to the news about the war. Is is true, uncle, that we may be at war at any moment?"

Mr. Fentolin sighed.

"A terrible reflection, my dear boy," he admitted softly, "but, alas! the finger of probability points that way."

"Then what about me?" Gerald exclaimed. "I don't want to complain, but listen. You dragged me home from a boarding school before I could even join my cadet corps. You've kept me hanging around here with a tutor. You wouldn't let me go to the university. You've stopped my entering either of the services. I am nineteen years old, and useless. Do you know what I should do to-morrow if war broke out? Enlist! It's the only thing left for me."

Mr. Fentolin was shocked.

"My dear boy!" he exclaimed. "You must not talk like that! I am quite sure that it would break your mother's heart. Enlist, indeed! Nothing of the sort. You are part of the civilian population of the country."

"Civilian population be d——d!" the boy suddenly cried, white with rage. "Uncle, forgive me, I have stood all I can bear. If you won't let me go in for the army—I could pass my exams to-morrow—I'm off. I'll enlist without waiting for the war. I can't bear this idle life any longer."

Mr. Fentolin leaned a little forward in his chair.

"Gerald!" he said softly.

The boy turned his head, turned it unwillingly. He had the air of a caged animal obeying the word of his keeper. A certain savage uncouthness seemed to have fallen upon him during the last few minutes. There was something almost like a snarl in his expression.

"Gerald!" Mr. Fentolin repeated.

Then it was obvious that there was something between those two, some memory or some living thing, seldom, if ever, to be spoken of, and yet always present. The boy began to tremble.

"You're a little overwrought, Gerald," Mr. Fentolin declared. "Sit quietly in my easy-chair for a few moments. Wait until I have examined Mr. Dunster's belongings. Ah! Meekins has been prompt, indeed."

There was a stealthy tap at the door. Meekins entered with the small dressing case in his hand. He brought it over to his master's chair. Mr. Fentolin pointed to the ground.

"Open it there, Meekins," he directed. "I fancy that the pocketbook you are carrying will prove more interesting. We will just glance through the dressing case first. Thank you. Yes, you can lay the things upon the floor. A man of Spartanlike life, I should imagine Mr. Dunster. A spare toothbrush, though, I am glad to see. Pajamas of most unattractive pattern. And what a taste in shirts! Nothing but wearing apparel and singularly little of that, I fancy."

The dressing case was empty, its contents upon the floor. Mr. Fentolin held out his hand and took the

pocketbook which Meekins had been carrying. It was an ordinary morocco affair, similar to those issued by American banking houses to inclose letters of credit. One side of it was filled with notes. Mr. Fentolin withdrew them, and glanced them through.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "No wonder our friend engages special trains! He travels like a prince, indeed. Two thousand pounds, or near it, in this little compartment. And here, I see a letter, a sealed letter with no address."

He held it out in front of him. It was a long commercial envelope of ordinary type, and although the flap was secured with a blob of sealing wax, there was no particular impression upon it.

"We can match this envelope, I think," Mr. Fentolin said softly. "The seal we can copy. I think that, for the sake of others, we must discover the cause for this hurried journey on the part of Mr. John P. Dunster."

With his long, delicate forefinger Mr. Fentolin slit the envelope, and withdrew the single sheet of paper which it contained. There were a dozen lines of written matter, and what appeared to be a dozen signatures appended. Mr. Fentolin read it, at first with ordinary interest. Then a change came. The look of a man drawn out of himself, drawn out of all knowledge of his surroundings or his present state, stole into his face. Literally he became transfixed. The delicate fingers of his left hand were gripping the side of his little carriage. His eyes shone as though those few written lines upon which they were riveted were, indeed, some message from an unknown, an unimagined world. Yet no word ever passed his lips. There came a time when the tension seemed a little relaxed. With fingers which still trembled, he folded up the sheet and replaced it in the envelope. He guarded it with both his hands and sat quite still. Neither Gerald nor his servant moved. Somehow, the sense of Mr. Fentolin's suppressed excitement seemed to have become communicated to them. It was a little tableau, broken at last by Mr. Fentolin himself.

"I should like," he said, turning to Gerald, "to be alone. It may interest you to know that this document which Mr. Dunster has brought across the seas, and which I hold in my hands, is the most amazing message of modern times."

Gerald rose to his feet.

"What are you going to do about it?" he asked abruptly. "Do you want any one in from the telegraph room?"

Mr. Fentolin shook his head slowly.

"At present," he announced, "I am going to reflect. Meekins, my chair to the north window—so. I am going to sit here," he went on, "and I am going to look across the sea and reflect. A very fortunate storm, after all, I think, which kept Mr. John P. Dunster from the Harwich boat last night! Leave me, Gerald, for a time. Stand behind my chair, Meekins, and see that no one enters."

Mr. Fentolin sat in his chair, his hands still gripping the wonderful document, his eyes traveling over the ocean now flecked with sunlight. His eyes were fixed upon the horizon. He looked steadily eastward.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. John P. Dunster opened his eyes upon strange surroundings. He found himself lying upon a bed deliciously soft, with lace-edged sheets and lavender-perfumed bed hangings. Through the discreetly opened upper window came a pleasant and ozone-laden breeze. The furniture in the room was mostly of an old-fashioned type, some of it of oak, curiously carved, and most of it surmounted with

a coat of arms. The apartment was lofty and of almost palatial proportions. The whole atmosphere of the place breathed comfort and refinement. The only thing of which he did not wholly approve was the face of the nurse, who rose silently to her feet at his murmured question:

"Where am I?"

She felt his forehead, altered a bandage for a moment, and took his wrist between her fingers.

"You have been ill," she said. "There was a railway accident. You are to lie quite still and not say a word. I am going to bring the doctor now."

Mr. Dunster dozed again for several moments. When he reopened his eyes, a man was standing by his bedside, a short man with a black beard and gold-rimmed glasses. Mr. Dunster, in his first stage of his convalescence, was perhaps difficult to please, for he did not like the look of the doctor, either.

"Please tell me where I am?" he begged.

"You have been in a railway accident," the doctor told him, "and you were brought here afterward."

"In a railway accident," Mr. Dunster repeated. "Ah, yes, I remember! I took a special to Harwich—I remember now. Where is my dressing bag?"

"It is here by the side of your bed."

"And my pocketbook?"

"It is on your dressing table."

"Have any of my things been looked at?"

"Only so far as was necessary to discover your identity," the doctor assured him. "Don't talk too much. The nurse is bringing you some beef tea."

"When," Mr. Dunster inquired, "shall I be able to continue my journey?"

"That," the doctor replied, "depends upon many things."

Mr. Dunster drank his beef tea, and felt considerably stronger. His head still ached, but his memory was returning.

"There was a young man in the carriage with me," he asked presently—"Mr. Gerald something, or other, I think, he said his name was?"

"Fentolin," the doctor said. "He is unhurt. This is his relative's house, to which you have been brought."

Mr. Dunster lay for a time with knitted brows. Once more the name of Fentolin seemed somehow familiar to him, seemed somehow to bring with it to his memory a note of warning. He looked around the room fretfully. He looked into the nurse's face, which he disliked exceedingly, and he looked at the doctor, whom he was beginning to detest.

"Whose house is this?" he demanded.

"This is St. David's Hall—the home of Mr. Miles Fentolin," the doctor told him. "The young gentleman with whom you were traveling is his nephew."

"Can I send a telegram?" Mr. Dunster asked, a little abruptly.

"Without a doubt," the doctor replied. "Mr. Fentolin desired me to ask you if there was any one whom you would like to apprise of your safety."

Again the man upon the bed lay quite still, with knitted brows. There was surely something familiar about that name. Was it his fevered fancy, or was there also something a little sinister?

The nurse, who had glided from the room, came back presently with some telegraph forms. Mr. Dunster held out his hand for them and then hesitated.

"Can you tell me any date, doctor, upon which I can rely upon leaving here?"

"You will probably be well enough to travel on the third day from now," the doctor assured him.

"The third day," Mr. Dunster muttered. "Very well."

He wrote out three telegrams, and passed them over.

"One," he said, "is to New York, one to The Hague, and one to London. There was plenty of money in my pocket. Perhaps you will find it and pay for these."

"Is there anything more," the doctor asked, "that can be done for your comfort?"

"Nothing at present," Mr. Dunster replied. "My head aches now, but I think that I shall want to leave before three days are up. Are you the doctor in the neighborhood?"

Sarson shook his head.

"I am physician to Mr. Fentolin's household," he answered quietly. "I live here. Mr. Fentolin is himself somewhat of an invalid, and requires constant medical attention."

Mr. Dunster contemplated the speaker steadfastly.

"You will forgive me," he said. "I am an American, and I am used to plain speech. I am quite unused to being attended by strange doctors. I understand that you are not in general practice now. Might I ask if you are fully qualified?"

"I am an M. D., of London," the doctor replied. "You can make yourself quite easy as to my qualifications. It would not suit Mr. Fentolin's purpose to intrust himself to the care of any one without a reputation."

He left the room, and Mr. Dunster closed his eyes. His slumbers, however, were not altogether peaceful ones. All the time there seemed to be a hammering inside his head, and from somewhere back in his obscured memory the name of Fentolin seemed to be continually asserting itself. From somewhere or other, the amazing sense, which sometimes, to men of adventure, gives warning of danger, seemed to have opened its feelers. He rested because he was exhausted, but even in his sleep he was ill at ease.

The doctor, with the telegrams in his hand, made his way down a splendid staircase, past the long picture gallery, where masterpieces of Van Dyck and Rubens frowned and leered down upon him; descended the final stretch of broad oak stairs, crossed the hall, and entered Mr. Fentolin's rooms. The old man was sitting before the open window, an easel in front of him, a palette in his left hand, painting with deft, swift touches.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, without looking around, "it is my friend, the doctor, my friend, Doctor Sarson, M. D., of London, L. R. C. P., and all the rest of it. He brings with him the odor of the sick room. For a moment or two, just for a moment, dear friend, do not disturb me. Do not bring any alien thoughts into my brain. I am absorbed, you see—absorbed. It is a strange problem of color, this."

He was silent for several moments, glancing repeatedly out of the window, and back to his canvas, painting all the time with swift and delicate precision.

"Meekins, who stands behind my chair," Mr. Fentolin continued, "even Meekins is entranced. He has a soul, my friend Sarson, although you might not think it. He, too, sees sometimes the color in the skies, the glitter upon the sands, the clear, sweet purity of those long stretches of virgin water. Meekins, I believe, has a soul, only he likes better to see these things grow under his master's touch than to wander about and solve their riddles for himself."

The man remained perfectly immovable. Not a feature twitched. Yet it was a fact that, although he stood where Mr. Fentolin could not possibly observe him, he never removed his eyes from the canvas.

"You see, my medical friend, that there has been a great tide in the night, following upon the flood? Even our

small landmarks are shifted. Soon, in my little carriage, I shall ride down to the Tower. I shall sit there and I shall watch the sea. I think that this evening, with the turn of the tide, the spray may reach even to my windows there. I shall paint again. There is always something fresh in the sea, you know—always something fresh in the sea. Like a human face—angry or pleased, sullen or joyful. Some people like to paint the sea at its calmest and most beautiful. Some people like to see happy faces around them. It is not every one who appreciates the other things. It is not quite like that with me, eh, Sarson?"

His hand fell to his side. Momentarily he had finished his work. He turned around and eyed the doctor, who stood in taciturn silence.

"Answer! Answer me!" he insisted.

The doctor's gloomy face seemed darker still.

"You have spoken the truth, Mr. Fentolin," he admitted. "You are not one of the vulgar herd who love to consort with pleasure and happiness. You are one of those who understand the beauty of unhappiness—in others," he added, with faint emphasis.

Mr. Fentolin smiled. His face became almost like the face of one of those angels of the great Italian master.

"How well you know me!" he murmured. "My humble effort, doctor—how do you like it?"

The doctor bent over the canvas.

"I know nothing about art," he said, a little roughly. "Your work seems to me clever—a little grotesque, perhaps; a little straining after the hard, plain things which threaten. Nothing of the idealist in your work, Mr. Fentolin."

Mr. Fentolin studied the canvas himself for a moment.

"A clever man, Sarson," he remarked coolly, "but no courtier. Never mind, my work pleases me. It gives me a passing sensation of happiness. Now what about our patient?"

"He recovers," the doctor pronounced. "From my short examination I should say that he had the constitution of an ox. I have told him that he will be up in three days. As a matter of fact, he will be able, if he wants to, to walk out of the house to-morrow."

Mr. Fentolin shook his head.

"We cannot spare him quite so soon," he declared. "We must avail ourselves of this wonderful chance afforded us by my brilliant young nephew. We must keep him with us for a little time. What is it that you have in your hands, doctor? Telegrams, I think. Let me look at them."

The doctor held them out. Mr. Fentolin took them eagerly into his thin, delicate fingers. Suddenly his face darkened. It became like the face of a spoiled and angry child.

"Cipher!" he exclaimed furiously. "A cipher which he knows so well as to remember it, too! Never mind, it will be easy to decode. It will amuse me during the afternoon. Very good, Sarson. I will take charge of these."

"You do not wish anything dispatched?"

"Nothing at present," Mr. Fentolin sighed. "It will be well, I think, for the poor man to remain undisturbed by any communications from his friends. Is he restless at all?"

"He wants to get on with his journey."

"We shall see. Now feel my pulse, Sarson. How am I this morning?"

The doctor held the thin wrist for a moment between his fingers, and let it go.

"In perfect health, as usual," he announced grimly.

"Ah, but you cannot be sure!" Mr. Fentolin protested. "My tongue, if you please."

He put it out.

"Excellent!"

"We must make quite certain," Mr. Fentolin continued. "There are so many people who would miss me. My place in the world would not be easily filled. Undo my waistcoat, Sarson. Feel my heart, please. Feel carefully. I can see the end of your stethoscope in your pocket. Don't scamp it. I fancied this morning, when I was lying here alone, that there was something almost like a palpitation—a quicker beat. Be very careful, Sarson. Now."

The doctor made his examination with impassive face. Then he stepped back.

"There is no change in your condition, Mr. Fentolin," he announced. "The palpitation you spoke of is a mistake. You are in perfect health."

Mr. Fentolin sighed gently.

"Then," he said, "I will now amuse myself by a gentle ride down to the Tower. You are entirely satisfied, Sarson? You are keeping nothing back from me?"

The doctor looked at him with grim, impassive face.

"There is nothing to keep back," he declared. "You have the constitution of a cowboy. There is no reason why you should not live for another thirty years."

Mr. Fentolin sighed, as though a weight had been removed from his heart.

"I will now," he decided, reaching forward for the handle of his carriage, "go down to the Tower. It is just possible that a few days' seclusion might be good for our guest."

The doctor turned silently away. There was no one there to see his expression as he walked toward the door.

CHAPTER VII.

The two men who were supping together in the grillroom at the Café Milan were talking with a seriousness which seemed a little out of keeping with the rose-shaded lamps and the swaying music of the band from the distant restaurant. Their conversation had started some hours before in the club smoking room, and had continued intermittently throughout the evening. It had received a further stimulus when Richard Hamel, who had bought an *Evening Standard* on their way from the theater a few minutes ago, came across a certain paragraph in it which he read aloud.

"Hanged if I understand things over here, nowadays, Reggie!" he declared, laying the paper down. "Here's another Englishman imprisoned in Germany—this time at a place no one ever heard of before. I won't try to pronounce it. What does it all mean? It's all very well to shrug your shoulders, but when there are eighteen arrests within one week on a charge of espionage, there must be something up."

For the first time Reginald Kinsley seemed inclined to discuss the subject seriously. He drew the paper toward him and read the little paragraph, word by word. Then he gave some further order to an attentive maître d'hôtel, and glanced around to be sure that they were not overheard.

"Look here, Dick, old chap," he said, "you are just back from abroad, and you are not quite in the hang of things yet. Let me ask you a plain question: What do you think of us all?"

"Think of you?" Hamel repeated, a little doubtfully. "Do you mean personally?"

"Take it any way you like," Kinsley replied. "Look at me. Nine years ago we played cricket in the same eleven. I don't look much like cricket now, do I?"

Hamel looked at his companion thoughtfully. For a man who was doubtless still young, Kinsley had certainly an aged appearance. The hair about his temples was gray; there were

lines about his mouth and forehead. He had the air of one who lived in an atmosphere of anxiety.

"To me," Hamel declared frankly, "you look worried. If I hadn't heard so much of the success of your political career, and all the rest of it, I should have thought that things were going badly with you."

"They've gone well enough with me personally," Kinsley admitted, "but I'm only one of many. Politics isn't the game it was. The foreign office especially is aging its men fast these few years. We've been going through hell, Hamel, and we are up against it now, hard up against it."

The slight smile passed from the lips of Hamel's sunburned, good-natured face. He himself seemed to become infected with something of his companion's anxiety.

"There's nothing seriously wrong, is there, Reggie?" he asked.

Kinsley sighed.

"Dick," he said, "I am afraid there is. It's very seldom I talk as plainly as this to any one, but you are just the person one can unburden oneself to a little, and to tell you the truth it's rather a relief. As you say, these eighteen arrests in one week do mean something. Half of the Englishman who have been arrested are, to my certain knowledge, connected with our secret service, and they have been arrested, in many cases, where there are no fortifications worth speaking of within fifty miles, on one pretext or another. The fact of the matter is that things are going on in Germany, just at the present moment, the knowledge of which is of vital interest to us."

"Then these arrests," Hamel remarked, "are really bona fide?"

"Without a doubt," his companion agreed. "I only wonder there have not been more. I am telling you what is a pretty open secret when I tell you that there is a conference, due to be held this week at some place or another, on the Continent—I don't know where myself—which will have a very important bearing upon our future. We know just as much as that and not much more."

"A conference between whom?" Hamel asked.

Kinsley dropped his voice almost to a whisper.

"We know," he replied, "that a very great man from Russia, a greater still from France, a minister from Austria, a statesman from Italy, and an envoy from Japan have been invited to meet a German minister, whose name I will not mention, even to you. The subject of their proposed discussion has never been breathed. One can only suspect. When I tell you that no one from this country was invited to the conference, I think you will be able, broadly speaking, to divine its purpose. The clouds have been gathering for a good many years, and we have only buried our heads a little deeper in the sands. We have had our chances and willfully chucked them away. National service or three more army corps, four years ago, would have brought us an alliance which would have meant absolute safety for twenty-one years. You know what happened. We have lived through many rumors, and escaped, more narrowly than most people realize, a great many dangers, but there is every indication, this time, that the end is really coming."

"And what will the end be?" Hamel inquired eagerly.

Kinsley shrugged his shoulders and paused while their glasses were filled with wine.

"It will be in the nature of a diplomatic coup," he said presently. "Of that much I feel sure. England will be forced into such a position that she will have no alternative left but to declare war. That, of course, will be the end of us. With our ridiculously small

army and absolutely no sane scheme for home defense, we shall lose all that there is worth fighting for—our colonies—without being able to strike a blow. The thing is so ridiculously obvious. It has been admitted time after time by every sea lord and every commander in chief. We have listened to it, and that's all. Our fleet is needed under present conditions to protect our own shores. There isn't a single battleship which could be safely spared. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Egypt, India must take care of themselves. I wonder whenever a nation of the world played fast and loose with great possessions as we have done!"

"This is a nice sort of thing to hear almost one's first night in England," Hamel remarked, a little gloomily. "Tell me some more about this conference? Are you sure that your information is reliable?"

"Our information is miserably scanty," Kinsley admitted. "Curiously enough, the man who must know most about the whole thing is an Englishman, one of the most curious mortals in the British empire. A spy of his succeeded in learning more than any of our people, and without being arrested, too."

"And who is this singular person?" Hamel asked.

"A man of whom you, I suppose, never heard," Kinsley replied. "His name is Fentolin—Miles Fentolin—and he lives somewhere down in Norfolk. He is one of the strangest characters that ever lived, stranger than any effort of fiction I ever met with. He was in the foreign office once, and every one was predicting for him a brilliant career. Then there was an accident—let me see, it must have been some six or seven years ago—and he had to have both his legs amputated. No one knows exactly how the accident happened, and there was always a certain amount of mystery connected with it. Since then he has buried himself in the country—I don't think, in fact, that he ever moves outside his place—but, somehow or other, he has managed to keep in touch with all the political movements of the day."

"Fentolin," Hamel repeated softly to himself. "Tell me, whereabouts does he live?"

"Quite a wonderful place in Norfolk, I believe, somewhere near the sea. I've forgotten the name, for the moment. He has had wireless telegraphy installed, he has a telegraph office in the house, half a dozen private wires, and they say that he spends an immense amount of money keeping in touch with foreign politics. His excuse is that he speculates largely, as I dare say he does. But just lately," Kinsley went on more slowly, "he has been an object of anxiety to all of us. It was he who sent the first agent out to Germany, to try and discover at least where this conference was to be held. His man returned in safety, and he has one over there now who has not been arrested. We seem to have lost nearly all of ours."

"Do you mean to say that this man Fentolin actually possesses information which the government hasn't, as to the intentions of foreign powers?" Hamel asked.

Kinsley nodded. There was a slight flush upon his pallid cheeks.

"He not only has it, but he doesn't mean to part with it. A few hundred years ago, when the rulers of this country were men with blood in their veins, he'd have been given just one chance to tell all he knew, and hung as a traitor if he hesitated. We don't do that sort of thing nowadays. We rather go in for preserving traitors. We permit them even in our own House of Commons. However, I don't want to depress you and play the alarmist so soon after you return to London. I dare say the old country'll muddle along through our time."

"Don't be foolish," Hamel begged. "There's no other subject of conversation could interest me half as much. Have you formed any idea yourself as to the nature of this conference?"

"We all have an idea," Kinsley replied grimly. "India for Russia; a large slice of China for Japan, with probably Australia thrown in; Alsace Lorraine for France's neutrality. There's bribery for you. What's to become of poor England then? Our friends are only human, after all, and it's only a question of handing over to them sufficient spoil. They must consider themselves first—that's the first duty of their politicians toward their country."

"You mean to say," Hamel asked, "that you seriously believe that a conference is on the point of being held at which France and Russia are to be invited to consider suggestions like this?"

"I am afraid there's no doubt about it," Kinsley declared. "Their ambassadors in London profess to know nothing. That, of course, is their reasonable attitude, but there's no doubt whatever that the conference has been planned. I should say that to-night we are nearer war, if we can summon enough spirit to fight, than we have been since Fashoda."

"Queer if I have returned just in time for the scrap," Hamel remarked thoughtfully. "I was in the militia once, so I expect I can get a job, if there's any fighting."

"I can get you a better job than fighting—one you can start on to-morrow, too," Kinsley announced abruptly, "that is if you really want to help?"

"Of course I do," Hamel insisted. "I'm on for anything."

"You say that you are entirely your own master for the next six months?"

"Or as much longer as I like," Hamel assented. "No plans at all except that I might drift round to the Norfolk coast and look up some of the places where the governor used to paint. There's a queer little house—St. David's Tower, I believe they call it—which really belongs to me. It was given to my father, or, rather, he bought it from a man who I think must have been some relative of your friend. I feel sure the name was Fentolin."

Reginald Kinsley set down his wine-glass.

"Is your St. David's Tower anywhere near a place called Salthouse?" he asked reflectively.

"That's the name of the village," Hamel admitted. "My father used to spend quite a lot of time in those parts, and painted at least a dozen pictures down there."

"This," Reginald Kinsley declared, lighting a cigarette, "is a coincidence. I think, if I were you, Dick, I'd go down and claim your property."

"Tired of me already?" Hamel asked, smiling.

Reginald Kinsley knocked the ash from his cigarette.

"It isn't that. The fact is, that job I was speaking to you about was simply this: We want some one to go down to Salthouse—not exactly as a spy, you know, but some one who has his wits about him. We are all of us very curious about this man Fentolin. There's no end of rumors which I won't mention to you, for they might only put you off the scent. But the man seems to be always intriguing. It wouldn't matter so much if he were our friend, or if he were simply a financier; but, to tell you the truth, we have cause to suspect him."

"But he's an Englishman, surely?" Hamel asked. "The Fentolin who was my father's friend was just a very wealthy Norfolk squire—one of the best, from all I have heard."

"Miles Fentolin is an Englishman," Kinsley admitted. "It is true, too, that he comes of a very ancient Norfolk family. It doesn't do, however, to build

too much upon that. From all I can learn of him, he is a sort of Puck, a professional mischief-maker. I don't suppose there's anything an outsider could find out which would be really useful to us; but, all the same, if I had the time I should certainly go down to Norfolk myself."

The conversation drifted away for a while. Mutual acquaintances entered, there were several introductions, and it was not until the two found themselves together in Kinsley's rooms for a few minutes before parting, that they were alone again. Hamel returned then once more to the subject.

"Reggie," he said, "if you think it would be of the slightest use, I'll go down to Salthouse to-morrow. I am rather keen on going there, anyway. I am absolutely fed up with life here already."

"It's just what I want you to do," Kinsley declared. "I am afraid Fentolin is a little too clever for you to get on the right side of him, but if you could only get an idea as to what his game is down there, it would be a great help. You see, the fellow can't have gone into all this sort of thing blindfold. We've lost several very useful agents abroad, and two from New York who've gone into his pay. There must be a method in it somewhere. If it really ends with his financial operations —why, all right. That's very likely what it'll come to, but we should like to know. The merest hint would be useful."

"I'll do my best," Hamel promised. "In any case, it will be just the few days' holiday I was looking forward to."

Kinsley helped himself to whisky and soda, and turned toward his friend.

"Here's luck to you, Dick! Take care of yourself. All sorts of things may happen, you know. Old man Fentolin may take a fancy to you, and tell you secrets that any statesman in Europe would be glad to hear. He may tell you why this conference is being held, and what the result will be. You may be the first to hear of our coming fall. Well, here's to you, anyway! Drop me a line, if you've anything to report."

"Cheer-o!" Hamel answered, as he set down his empty tumbler. "Astonishing how keen I feel about this little adventure. I'm perfectly sick of the humdrum life I have been leading the last week, and you do sort of take one back to the Arabian Nights, you know, Reggie. I am never quite sure whether to take you seriously or not."

Kinsley smiled as he held his friend's hand for a moment.

"Dick," he said earnestly, "if only you'd believe it, the adventures in the Arabian Nights were as nothing compared with the present-day drama of foreign politics. You see, we've learned to conceal things nowadays—to smooth them over, to play the part of ordinary citizens to the world while we tug at the underhand levers in our secret moments. Good night! Good luck!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Richard Hamel, although he certainly had not the appearance of a person afflicted with nerves, gave a slight start. For the last half hour, during which time the train had made no stop, he had been alone in his compartment. Yet to his surprise he was suddenly aware that the seat opposite to him had been noiselessly occupied by a girl whose eyes, also, were fixed with curious intentness upon the broad expanse of marshland and sands across which the train was slowly making its way. Hamel had spent a great many years abroad, and his first impulse was to speak with the unexpected stranger. He forgot for a moment that he was in England, traveling in a first-class carriage, and

pointed with his left hand toward the sea.

"Queer country, this, isn't it?" he remarked pleasantly. "Do you know, I never heard you come in. It gave me quite a start when I found that I had a fellow passenger."

She looked at him with a certain amount of still surprise, a look which he returned just as steadfastly, because even in those few seconds he was conscious of that strange, selective interest, certainly unaccounted for by his own impressions of her appearance. She seemed to him, at that first glance, very far indeed from being good looking, according to any of the standards by which he had measured good looks. She was thin, too thin for his taste, and she carried herself with an aloofness to which he was unaccustomed. Her cheeks were quite pale, her hair of a soft shade of brown, her eyes gray and sad. She gave him altogether an impression of colorlessness, and he had been living in a land where color and vitality meant much. Her speech, too, in its very restraint, fell strangely upon his ears.

"I have been traveling in an uncomfortable compartment," she observed. "I happened to notice, when passing along the corridor, that yours was empty. In any case, I am getting out at the next station."

"So am I," he replied, still cheerfully. "I suppose the next station is St. David's?"

She made no answer, but so far as her expression counted for anything at all, she was a little surprised. Her eyes considered him for a moment. Hamel was tall, well over six feet, powerfully made, with good features, clear eyes, and complexion usually sunburned. He wore a flannel collar of unfamiliar shape, and his clothes, although they were neat enough, were of a pattern and cut obviously designed to afford the maximum of ease and comfort with the minimum regard to appearance. He wore, too, very thick boots, and his hands gave one the impression that they were seldom gloved. His voice was pleasant, and he had the easy self-confidence of a person sure of himself in the world. She put him down as a colonial —perhaps an American—but his rank in life mystified her.

"This seems the queerest stretch of country," he went on; "long spits of sand jutting right out into the sea, dikes and creeks—miles and miles of them. Now, I wonder, is it low tide now or high? Low, I should think, because of the seashine on the sand there."

She glanced out of the window.

"The tide," she told him, "is almost at its lowest."

"You live in this neighborhood, perhaps?" he inquired.

"I do," she assented.

"Sort of country one might get very fond of," he ventured.

She glanced at him from the depths of her gray eyes.

"Do you think so?" she rejoined coldly. "For my part, I hate it."

He was surprised at the unexpected emphasis of her tone—the first time, indeed, that she had shown any signs of interest in the conversation.

"Kind of dull, I suppose you find it," he remarked pensively, looking out across the waste of lavender-grown marshes, sand hummocks piled with seaweed, and a far-distant line of pebbled shore. "And yet, I don't know. I have lived by the sea a good deal, and however monotonous it may seem at first, there's always plenty of change, really. Tide and wind do such wonderful work."

She, too, was looking out now toward the sea.

"Oh, it isn't exactly that," she said quietly. "I am quite willing to admit what all the tourists and chance visitors call the fascination of these places. I happen to dislike them, that is all.

Perhaps it is because I live here, because I see them day by day; perhaps because the sight of them and the thought of them have become woven into my life."

She was talking half to herself. For a moment, even the knowledge of his presence had escaped her. Hamel, however, did not realize that fact. He welcomed her confidence as a sign of relaxation from the frigidity of her earlier demeanor.

"That seems hard," he observed sympathetically. "It seems odd to hear you talk like that, too. Your life, surely, ought to be pleasant enough."

She looked away from the sea into his face. Although the genuine interest which she saw there, and the kindly expression of his eyes, disarmed annoyance, she still stiffened slightly.

"Why ought it?"

The question was a little bewildering.

"Why, because you are young, and a girl," he replied. "It's natural to be cheerful, isn't it?"

"Is it?" she answered listlessly. "I cannot tell. I have not had much experience."

"How old are you?" he asked bluntly.

This time it certainly seemed as though her reply would contain some rebuke for his curiosity. She glanced once more into his face, however, and the instinctive desire to administer that well-deserved snub passed away. He was so obviously interested, his question was asked so naturally, that its spice of impertinence was as though it had not existed.

"I am twenty-one," she told him.

"And how long have you lived here?"

"Since I left boarding school, four years ago."

"Anywhere near where I am going to bury myself for a time, I wonder?" he went on.

"That depends," she replied. "Our only neighbors are the Lorneybrookes, of Market Burnham. Are you going there?"

He shook his head.

"I've got a little shanty of my own," he explained, "quite close to St. David's station. I've never even seen it yet."

She vouchsafed some slight show of curiosity.

"Where is this shanty, as you call it?" she inquired.

"I really haven't the faintest idea," he replied. "I am looking for it now. All I can tell you is that it stands just out of reach of the full tides, on a piece of rock, dead on the beach, and about a mile from the station. It was built originally for a coast-guard station, and meant to hold a lifeboat, but they found they could never launch the lifeboat when they had it, so the man to whom all the foreshore and most of the land around here belongs—a Mr. Fentolin, I believe—sold it to my father. I expect the place has tumbled to pieces by this time, but I thought I'd have a look at it."

She was gazing at him steadfastly now, with parted lips.

"What is your name?" she demanded.

"Richard Hamel."

"Hamel."

She repeated it lingeringly. It seemed quite unfamiliar.

"Was your father a great friend of Mr. Fentolin's, then?" she asked.

"I believe so, in a sort of way," he answered. "My father was Hamel, the artist, you know. They made him an R. A. some time before he died. He used to come out here and live in a tent. Then Mr. Fentolin let him use this place, and finally sold it to him. My father used often to speak to me about it before he died."

"Tell me," she said, "I do not know much about these matters, but have you any papers to prove that it was sold to your father, and that you have the right to occupy it now when you choose?"

He smiled. "Of course I have. As a matter of fact, as none of us have been here for so long, I thought I'd better bring the title deed, or whatever they call it, along with me. It's with the rest of my traps at Norwich. Oh, the place belongs to me, right enough!" he went on, smiling. "Don't tell me that any one's pulled it down, or that it's disappeared from the face of the earth?"

"No," she said, "it still remains there. When we are round the next curve I think I can show it to you. But every one has forgotten, I think, that it doesn't belong to Mr. Fentolin still. He uses it himself very often."

"What for?"

She looked at her questioner quite steadfastly, quite quietly, speechlessly. A curious uneasiness crept into his thoughts. There were mysterious things in her face. He knew from that moment that she, too, directly or indirectly, was concerned with those strange happenings at which Kinsley had hinted. He knew that there were things which she was keeping from him now.

"Mr. Fentolin uses one of the rooms as a studio. He likes to paint there, and be near the sea," she explained. "But for the rest, I do not know. I never go near the place."

"I am afraid," he remarked, after a few moments' silence, "that I shall be a little unpopular with Mr. Fentolin. Perhaps I ought to have written first, but then, of course, I had no idea that any one was making use of the place."

"I do not understand," she said, "how you can possibly expect to come down like this and live there, without any preparation."

"Why not?"

"You haven't any servants, nor any furniture, nor things to cook with."

He laughed.

"Oh, I am an old campaigner," he assured her. "I meant to pick up a few oddments in the village. I don't suppose I shall stay very long, anyhow, but I thought I'd like to have a look at the place. By the bye, what sort of a man is Mr. Fentolin?"

Again there was that curious expression in her eyes, an expression almost of secret terror, this time not wholly concealed. He could have sworn that her hands were cold.

"He met with an accident many years ago," she said slowly. "Both his legs were amputated. He spends his life in a little carriage, which he wheels about himself."

"Poor fellow!" Hamel exclaimed, with a strong man's ready sympathy for suffering. "That is just as much as I have heard about him. Is he a decent sort of fellow in other ways? I suppose, anyhow, if he has really taken a fancy to my little shanty, I shall have to give it up."

Then, as it seemed to him, for the first time real life leaped into her face. She leaned toward him. Her tone was half commanding, half imploring, her manner entirely confidential.

"Don't!" she begged. "It is yours. Claim it. Live in it. Do anything you like with it, but take it away from Mr. Fentolin!"

Hamel was speechless. He sat a little forward, a hand on either knee, his mouth ungracefully open, an expression of blank and utter bewilderment in his face. For the first time he began to have vague doubts concerning this young lady. Everything about her had been so strange—her quiet entrance into the carriage, her unusual manner of talking, and finally this last passionate, inexplicable appeal.

"I am afraid," he said at last, "I don't quite understand. You say the poor fellow has taken a fancy to the place, and likes being there. Well, it isn't much of a catch for me, anyway. I'm rather a wanderer, and I dare say I shan't be back in these parts again for years. Why shouldn't I let him have

it, if he wants it? It's no loss to me. I'm not a painter, you know, like my father."

She seemed on the point of making a further appeal. Her lips, even, were parted, her head a little thrown back. And then she stopped. She said nothing. The silence lasted so long that he became almost embarrassed.

"You will forgive me if I am a little dense, won't you?" he begged. "To tell you the truth," he went on, smiling, "I've got a sort of feeling that I'd like to do anything you ask me. Now, won't you just explain a little more clearly what you mean, and I'll blow up the old place sky-high, if it's any pleasure to you."

She seemed suddenly to have reverted to her former self—the cold and colorless young woman who had first taken the seat opposite to his.

"Mine was a very foolish request," she admitted quietly. "I am sorry that I ever made it. It was just an impulse because the little building we were speaking of has been connected with one or two very disagreeable episodes. Nevertheless, it was foolish of me. How long did you think of staying there—that is," she added, with a faint smile, "providing that you find it possible to prove your claim and take up possession?"

"Oh, just for a week or so," he answered lightly; "and as to regaining possession of it," he went on, a slightly pugnacious instinct stirring him, "I don't imagine that there'll be any difficulty about that."

"Really!" she murmured.

"Not that I want to make myself disagreeable," he continued, "but the Tower is mine, right enough, even if I have let it remain unoccupied for some time."

She let down the window—a task in which he hastened to assist her. A rush of salt, cold air swept into the compartment. He sniffed it eagerly.

"Wonderful!" he exclaimed.

She stretched out a long arm, and pointed. Away in the distance, on the summit of a line of pebbled shore, standing as it seemed sheer over the sea, was a little black speck.

"That," she said, "is the Tower."

He changed his position, and leaned out of the window.

"Well, it's a queer little place," he remarked. "It doesn't look worth quarreling over, does it?"

"And that," she went on, directing his attention to the hill, "is Mr. Fentolin's home, St. David's Hall."

"I never saw anything like it," he declared. "Why, it's barely a quarter of a mile from the sea, is it?"

"A little more than that. It is a strangely situated abode, isn't it?"

"Wonderful!" he agreed, with emphasis. "I must study the geological formation of that hill," he continued, with interest. "Why, it looks almost like an island now."

"That is because of the floods," she told him. "Even at high tide the creeks never reach so far as the back there. All the water you see stretching away inland is flood water—the result of the storm, I suppose. This is where you get out," she concluded, rising to her feet.

She turned away with the slightest nod. A maid was already awaiting her at the door of the compartment. Hamel was suddenly conscious of the fact that he disliked her going immensely.

"We shall, perhaps," he remarked, "meet again during the next few days."

She half turned her head. Her expression was scarcely encouraging.

"I hope," she said, "that you will not be disappointed in your quarters."

Hamel followed her slowly onto the platform, saw her escorted to a very handsome automobile by an obsequious station master, and watched the car disappear down the stretch of straight road which led to the hill. Then, with a cane

in one hand and the hand bag, which was his sole luggage, in the other, he left the station, and turned seaward.

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Fentolin, surrounded by his satellites, was seated in his chair before the writing table. There were present in the room most of the people important to him in his somewhat singular life. A few feet away, in characteristic attitude, stood Meekins. Doctor Sarson, with his hands behind him, was looking out of the window. At the farther end of the table stood a confidential telegraph clerk, who was just departing with a little sheaf of messages. By his side, with a notebook in her hand, stood Mr. Fentolin's private secretary —a woman, white-haired, with a strangely transparent skin and light-brown eyes, dressed in somber black, a woman who might have been of any age from thirty to fifty. Behind her was a middle-aged man, whose position in the household no one was quite sure about—a clean-shaven man, whose name was Ryan, and who might very well have been once an actor or a clergyman. In the background stood Henderson, the perfect butler.

"It is perhaps opportune," Mr. Fentolin said quietly, "that you all whom I trust should be present here together. I wish you to understand one thing. You have, I believe, in my employ learned the gift of silence. It is to be exercised with regard to a certain visitor brought here by my nephew, a visitor who, I regret to say, is now lying seriously ill."

There was absolute silence. Doctor Sarson alone turned from the window as though about to speak, but met Mr. Fentolin's eye, and at once resumed his position.

"I rely upon you all," Mr. Fentolin continued softly. "Henderson, you, perhaps, have the most difficult task, for you have the servants to control. Nevertheless, I rely upon you, also. If one word of this visitor's presence here leaks out even so far as the village, out they go, every one of them!"

"I think, sir," Henderson said respectfully, "that I can answer for the servants. Being mostly foreigners, they see little or nothing of the village people."

No one else made any remark. It was strange to see how dominated they all were by that queer little fragment of humanity, whose head scarcely reached a foot above the table before which he sat. They departed silently, almost abjectly, dismissed with a single wave of the hand. Only Mr. Fentolin beckoned his secretary to remain. She came a little nearer.

"Sit down, Lucy!" he ordered.

She seated herself a few feet away from him. Mr. Fentolin watched her for several moments. He himself had his back to the light. The woman, on the other hand, was facing it. The windows were high, and the curtains were drawn back to their fullest extent. It was a cold stream of northern light which fell upon her face. Mr. Fentolin gazed at her, and nodded his head slightly.

"My dear Lucy," he declared, "you are wonderful—a perfect cameo, a gem. To look at you now, with your delightful white hair and your flawless skin, one would never believe that you had ever spoken a single angry word."

She looked at him, still without speech. The immobility of her face was indeed a marvelous thing. Mr. Fentolin's expression darkened.

"Sometimes," he murmured softly, "I think that if I had strong fingers—really strong fingers, you know, Lucy —I should want to take you by the throat and hold you tighter and tighter, until your breath came fast, and your eyes came out from their shadows."

She turned over a few pages of her

notebook. To all appearance she had not heard a word.

"To-day," she announced, "is the fourth of April. Shall I send out the various checks to those men in Paris, New York, Frankfort, St. Petersburg, and Tokyo?"

"You can send the checks," he told her. "Be sure that you draw them, as usual, upon the Crédit Lyonaise, and in the name you know of. Say to Lebonaitre, of Paris, that you consider his last reports faulty. No mention was made of Monsieur C.'s visit to the Russian embassy, or of the supper party given to the Baron von Erlstein by a certain Russian gentleman. Warn him, if you please, that reports, with such omissions, are useless to me."

She wrote a few words in her book.

"You made a note of that?"

She raised her head.

"I do not make mistakes," she said.

His eyebrows were drawn together. This was his work, he told himself, this magnificent physical subjection. Yet his inability to stir her sometimes maddened him.

"You know who is in this house?" he asked. "You know the name of my unknown guest?"

"I know nothing," she replied. "His presence does not interest me."

"Supposing I desire you to know?" he persisted, leaning a little forward. "Supposing I tell you that it is your duty to know?"

"Then," she said, "I should tell you that I believe him to be the special envoy from New York to The Hague, or whatever place on the Continent this coming conference is to be held at."

"Right, woman!" Mr. Fentolin answered sharply. "Right! It is the special envoy. He has his mandate with him. I have them both—the man and his mandate. Can you guess what I am going to do with them?"

"It is not difficult," she replied. "Your methods are scarcely original. His mandate to the flames and his body to the sea!"

She raised her eyes as she spoke, and looked over Mr. Fentolin's shoulder, across the marshland to the gray stretch of ocean. Her eyes became fixed. It was not possible to say that they held any expression, and yet one felt that she saw beneath the gray waves, even to the rocks and caverns below.

"Beast of a woman!" he shouted. "You ghoul! How dare you! How dare you——"

He stopped short. He passed his hand across his forehead. All the time the woman remained unmoved.

"Do you know," he muttered, his voice still shaking a little, "that I believe sometimes I am afraid of you? How would you like to see me there, eh, down at the bottom of that hungry sea? You watch sometimes so fixedly. You'd miss me, wouldn't you? I am a good master, you know. I pay well. You've been with me a good many years. You were a different sort of woman when you first came."

"Yes," she admitted, "I was a different sort of woman."

"You don't remember those days, I suppose," he went on, "the days when you had brown hair, when you used to carry roses about, and sing to yourself, while you beat your work out of that wretched typewriter?"

"No," she answered, "I do not remember those days. They do not belong to me. It is some other woman you are thinking of."

Their eyes met. Mr. Fentolin turned first away. He struck the bell at his elbow. She rose at once.

"Be off!" he ordered. "When you look at me like that you send shivers through me! You'll have to go—I can see you'll have to go. I can't keep you any longer. You are the only person on the face of the earth who dares to say things to me which make me think, the only person who doesn't shrink at

the sound of my voice. You'll have to go. Send Sarson to me at once. You've upset me!"

She listened to his words in expressionless silence. When he had finished, carrying her book in her hand, she very quietly moved toward the door. He watched her, leaning a little forward in his chair, his lips parted, his eyes threatening. She walked with steady, even footsteps. She carried herself with almost machinelike erectness, her skirts were noiseless. She had the trick of turning the handle of the door in perfect silence. He heard her calm voice in the hall:

"Doctor Sarson is to go to Mr. Fentolin."

Mr. Fentolin sat quite still, feeling his own pulse.

"That woman," he muttered to himself, "that woman—some day I shouldn't be surprised if she really——"

He paused. The doctor had entered the room.

"I am upset, Sarson," he declared. "Come and feel my pulse quickly. That woman has upset me."

"Miss Price?"

"Miss Price—Lucy—yes!"

"It seems unlike her," the doctor remarked. "I have never heard her utter a useless syllable in my life."

Mr. Fentolin held out his wrist.

"It's what she doesn't say," he muttered.

The doctor produced his watch. In less than a minute he put it away.

"This is quite unnecessary," he pronounced. "Your pulse is wonderful."

Mr. Fentolin leaned a little back in his chair. An expression of satisfaction crept over his face.

"You reassure me, my dear Sarson. That is excellent. What of our patient?"

"There is no change."

"I am afraid," Mr. Fentolin sighed, "that we shall have trouble with him. These strong people always give trouble."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"It will be just the same in the long run," he remarked.

Mr. Fentolin held up his finger.

"Listen! A motor car, I believe?"

"It is Miss Fentolin, who is just arriving," the doctor announced. "I saw the car coming as I crossed the hall."

Mr. Fentolin nodded gently.

"Indeed?" he replied. "Indeed? So my dear niece has returned. Open the door, friend Sarson. Open the door, if you please. She will be anxious to see me. We must summon her."

CHAPTER X.

Mr. Fentolin raised to his lips the little gold whistle which hung from his neck, and blew it. He seemed to devote very little effort to the operation, yet the strength of the note was wonderful. As the echoes died away, he let it fall by his side, and waited, with a pleased smile upon his lips. In a few seconds there was the hurried flutter of skirts and the sound of footsteps. The girl who had just completed her railway journey, entered, followed by her brother. They were both a little out of breath, they both approached the chair without a smile, the girl in advance, with a certain expression of apprehension in her eyes. Mr. Fantolin sighed. He appeared to notice these things, and regret them.

"My child," he said, holding out his hands; "my dear Esther, welcome home again! I heard the car outside. I am grieved that you did not at once hurry to my side."

"I have not been in the house two minutes," Esther replied, "and I haven't seen mother yet. Forgive me."

She had come to a standstill a few yards away. She moved now very slowly toward the chair. She had the air of one fulfilling a hateful task. The

fingers which accepted his hands were extended almost hesitatingly. He drew her closer to him and held her there.

"Your mother, my dear Esther, is, I regret to say, suffering from a slight indisposition," he remarked. "She has been confined to her room for the last few days. Just a trifling affair of the nerves; nothing more, Doctor Sarson assures me. But, my dear child," he went on, "your fingers are as cold as ice. You look at me so strangely, too. Alas! you have not the affectionate disposition of your dear mother. One would scarcely believe that we have been parted for more than a week."

"For more than a week!" she repeated, under her breath.

"Stoop down, my dear. I must kiss your forehead—there! Now, bring up a chair to my side. You seem frightened—alarmed. Have you ill news for me?"

"I have no news," she answered, gradually recovering herself.

"The gayeties of London, I fear," he protested gently, "have proved a little unsettling."

"There were no gayeties for me," the girl replied bitterly. "Mrs. Sargent obeyed your orders very faithfully. I was not allowed to move out except with her."

"My dear child, you would not go about London unchaperoned!"

"There is a difference," she retorted, "between a chaperon and a jailer."

Mr. Fentolin sighed. He shook his head slowly. He seemed pained.

"I am not sure," he declared, "that you repay my care as it deserves, Esther. There is something in your deportment which disappoints me. Never mind, your brother has made some atonement. I intrusted him with a little mission, in which I am glad to say he has been brilliantly successful."

"I cannot say that I am glad to hear it," Esther replied quietly.

Mr. Fentolin sat back in his chair. His long fingers played nervously together; he looked at her gravely.

"My dear child," he exclaimed, in a tone of pained surprise, "your atttiude distresses me!"

"I cannot help it. I have told you what I think about Gerald and the life he is compelled to live here. I don't mind so much for myself, but for him I think it is abominable."

"The same as ever," Mr. Fentolin sighed. "I fear that this little change has done you no good, dear niece."

"Change!" she echoed. "It was only a change of prisons."

Mr. Fentolin shook his head slowly—a distressful gesture. Yet all the time he had somehow the air of a man secretly gratified.

"You are beginning to depress me," he announced. "I think that you can go away. You can take Gerald with you. I have nothing to say to Gerald just now. He is in my good books. Is there anything I can do for you, Gerald? Your allowance, for instance—a trifling increase or an advance? I am in a generous humor."

"Then grant me what I begged for the other day," the boy answered quickly. "Let me go to Sandhurst. I could enter my name next week for the examinations, and I could pass to-morrow."

"So you want to be a soldier," Mr. Fentolin continued musingly. "Well, well, why not? Our picture galleries are full of them. There has been a Fentolin in every great battle for the last five hundred years. Sailors, too—plenty of them—and just a few diplomatists. Brave fellows! Not one, I fancy," he added, "like me—not one condemned to pass his days in a perambulator. You are a fine fellow, Gerald—a regular Fentolin. Getting on for six feet, aren't you?"

"Six feet two, sir."

"A very fine fellow," Mr. Fentolin

repeated. "I am not so sure about the army, Gerald. You see, there are some people who say, like your American friend, that we are even now almost on the brink of war."

"All the more reason for me to hurry," the boy begged.

Mr. Fentolin closed his eyes.

"Don't!" he insisted. "Have you ever stopped to think what war means —the war you speak of so lightly? The suffering, the misery of it! All the pageantry, and music, and heroism in front; and behind, a blackened world, a trail of writhing corpses, a world of weeping women for whom the sun shall never rise again. Ugh! An ugly thing war, Gerald. I am not sure that you are not better at home here. Why not practice golf a little more assiduously? I see from the local paper that you are still playing at two handicap. Now, with your physique, I should have thought you would have been a scratch player long before now."

"I play cricket, sir," the boy reminded him, a little impatiently; "and, after all, there are other things in the world besides games."

Mr. Fentolin's long finger shot suddenly out. He was leaning a little from his chair. His expression of gentle immobility had passed away. His face was stern, almost stony.

"You have spoken the truth, Gerald," he said. "There are other things in the world besides games. There is the real, the tragical, side of life, the duties one takes up, the obligations of honor. You have not forgotten, young man, the burden you carry?"

The boy was paler, but he had drawn himself to his full height.

"I have not forgotten, sir," he answered bitterly. "Do I show any signs of forgetting? Haven't I done your bidding, year by year? Am I not here now to do it?"

"Then, do it!" Mr. Fentolin retorted sharply. "When I am ready for you to leave here, you shall leave. Until then, you are mine. Remember that. Ah, this is Doctor Sarson who comes, I believe. That must mean that it is five o'clock. Come in, doctor. I am not engaged. You see, I am alone with my dear niece and nephew. We have been having a little pleasant conversation."

Doctor Sarson bowed to Esther, who scarcely glanced at him. He remained in the background, quietly waiting.

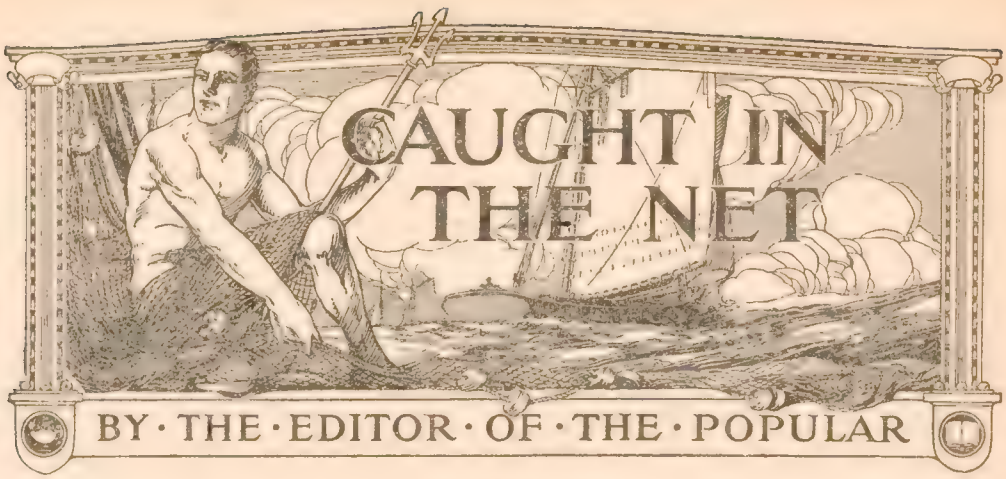
"A very delightful little conversation," Mr. Fentolin concluded. "I have been congratulating my nephew, doctor, upon his wisdom in preferring the quiet country life down here to the wearisome routine of a profession. He escapes the embarrassing choice of a career by preferring to devote his life to my comfort. I shall not forget it. I shall not be ungrateful. I may have my faults, but I am not ungrateful. Run away, now, both of you. Dear children you are, but one wearies, you know, of everything. I am going out. You see, the twilight is coming. The tide is changing. I am going down to meet the sea."

His little carriage moved toward the door. The brother and sister passed out. Esther led Gerald into the great dining room, and from there, through the open windows, out onto the terrace. She gripped his shoulder and pointed down to the Tower.

"Something," she whispered in his ear, "is going to happen there."

TO BE CONTINUED.

The second part of this story will appear two weeks hence, in the first June POPULAR, *on sale May 7th.*



WASTE

THE American farmer is wasting his substance. In the year 1913, the number of meat-producing animals in the United States decreased to such an extent as to warrant alarm. Beef cattle show a falling off of 1,762,000 head. That is equivalent to five per cent. The number of hogs has been reduced by 4,082,000. That means seven per cent. All this is most significant in view of the steady increase in population.

In a monetary sense the year was not a particularly good one for the agriculturist, despite the fact that he got on an average eighteen per cent more for his cattle than the year before, seventeen per cent more for hogs per pound, and eight per cent more for the sheep he sold. While he got more for the things he sold, he had to pay more for the things he bought. He is likely to find within the next year or two that it was a mistake to make such inroads into his capital represented by his meat-producing animals.

For a nation so favored as the United States to be confronted with short food supplies, and to be threatened with having the condition aggravated, is an indictment against civilization. Of the tillable land of the republic, only twenty-seven per cent is under cultivation, and that twenty-seven per cent does not yield one-half of what it would produce under proper methods of cultivation. The pasture land is more than two-thirds as great as that of the land now tilled. Of the raising of live stock the American has been scandalously negligent. The prairies of the West have been whitened many times within the last thirty years with the bones of tens of thousands of cattle killed through exposure.

From the riotous oversupply that brought on such waste to the shortage that has entailed suffering to hundreds of thousands of persons is not to the credit of an intelligent people.

WATCHING THE WHEELS GO ROUND

IF you are fortunate enough to live in a Middle Western town of progressive tendency, you can drop in on the commissioners of a morning, and watch them sitting around the table, dealing out government. You catch them in the act. You have a glow, as if you had surprised a process at work, like hearing the grass grow. But the huge machinery of New York is just as much in the open, and it is only the laziness of citizens that fails to take advantage of the

Friday meeting of the board of estimate and apportionment. There the City Fathers sit, those men whose faces have launched a thousand orators, adorned a vast acreage of billboards, and burned the pyrotechnic powder of vivid campaigns.

We have become so used in the larger burgs to thinking of government as invisible and long distance, that we leave them to work their large accomplishment in the vagueness. But there is government functioning for you, right in your presence. You are honored spectators and auditors in fine old pews.

A few feet in front of you is the semicircle of Fathers, young Fathers. Those capable wheels are worth the watching revolve. Those trained men, floated into power on a half million of ballots, are as excellent a spectacle as a two-dollar show. And it refreshes you, the obscure mite of a voter, to catch their deliberations, and relate your will to that overflow of force.

It would brighten the sense of citizenship for many a man to see his public servants at work. He would vote next election with a heightened consciousness of worth in the act, because of the immediacy of connection between his pencil cross and the working of the corporate will.

Mayor Mitchel is the neat college-man type of person. He has a ring on his finger and a stickpin in his tie. His suit is light in color, very light for a bleak winter day. His hair is black over that bright expanse. He has thin lips, tightly compressed in a straight line, a sharp nose, and roving eyes. His fingers, his eyes, his lips, his head, are always moving—a nervous man. He talks in a thin voice, smiling rather often. He has a knack of swift summary, reducing an engineer's report to simple, direct terms. He told a throng of petitioners:

"Unless you can find another site in two weeks, this site is adopted."

He said of a proposal to postpone action: "I'm afraid that would only lead these people to believe they had a chance, when they hadn't."

GOOD HOUSING

THE man who sells bad food to you is amenable to the law, but the man who sells a bad house to you is not. A large proportion of the structures built in cities and towns are flimsy, badly planned, and dishonestly constructed.

Good housing is second in importance only to good food, yet in no branch of living is there less attention given to the safeguarding of health. The building inspector should rank with the health inspector. The careless or incompetent architect or the unworthy builder should be dealt with as severely as the purveyor of tainted beef.

In most matters of life we buy what we think we want rather than what we know we want. Most persons in renting rooms or buying homes display more interest in the color of the wall paper or the style of architecture than in the plumbing, the ventilation, the heating arrangement, the flues, and the strength, safety, and durability of the structure. As for women, they will forgive much if there is a lot of closet space.

In pagan Rome, building was one of the noblest of man's endeavors. The man who put up a structure, small or large, sought to make it a monument to him. Who knows or cares who builds our structures to-day? The buildings of Rome have endured through the ages. There are few buildings in America that will stand the test of the span of one man's life.

A municipal building was put up in New York at a cost of fifteen million dollars. The mayor and others now denounce it as badly planned and a waste of space as constructed. Little consideration, it was declared, was given to symmetry, harmony, or utility. That structure typifies in a measure the city method of housing. We spend tremendous sums for buildings without giving real thought to our needs. When we tear down and build anew, we commit the same blunders over again.

The city builders are not alone in the sinning. The average farmhouse is a horror as a habitation. The average village home is a dreary, drafty place in winter, and attractive only to mosquitoes, flies, and other winged pests in summer. The world would be a better place to live in if we inoculated architects and builders with the early Roman virtues at the same time that they got a smattering of modern science.

THE PROGRAM

THE fight against commercialized prostitution is gradually becoming focused. The old spasmodic raiding and fanaticism in the midst of a vast indifference are giving way to a steady, well-aimed campaign. Two of the methods now used are to starve the social evil by cutting off the fresh sources of supply, and, second, to lessen the already existing supply by absorbing some of it back into the normal community.

Cutting off the sources of supply: This is accomplished by making it difficult and even dangerous to put new, innocent girls into the life. By skillful prosecution and prison penalty, it can be made impossible for a girl to be ruined and sold for money to the commercialized system. In a single generation, commercialized prostitution will cease if the source of supply is choked.

To reduce the present supply: This will not be accomplished by raiding, because as many unfortunates exist after the raid as before it. It will be accomplished by lifting out from the life such girls as can be turned to useful work. So the now-existing supply will be in part slowly absorbed into the body of the healthful community. That leaves the mentally defective and the diseased to be cared for, as other abnormal cases are cared for, by hospital treatment, by sanitarium, by colonizing, by oversight.

Then we can proceed in the solution of this most ancient evil by training the young in ways of efficient work, so that the community will have an ever-increasing need of each individual. By raising wages as efficiency increases, we shall gradually have a wage scale that will grant a decent living and a measure of security to young men and young women, making it possible for them to marry while they are still young and fresh.

CHANGING STANDARDS

IT is interesting to note that through the changing standards from generation to generation there are some things that persist. Our idea of a gentleman is very different from what it used to be. There have been times when drinking, sporting, dueling, idling, and inheriting were the outward marks of a gentleman. From age to age the ideal has changed. But through all of these changing standards there has been one or two qualities which persisted. For instance, at no time in the world's history has a man been considered a gentleman who would not face the issue and take his share of responsibility. It

always has been, and no doubt always will be, that a man who tries to shift blame that should attach to him, and who dodges the responsibility for his own conduct, is not a gentleman.

It is rather strange that of all the qualities which each generation has deemed most essential to the making of a gentleman, this should be the one that persists. Yet, after all, it is a fundamental one. It is really the basis of most men's character. If he scorns evasion, and unflinchingly takes whatever comes to him without trying to unload it on weaker ones, he has a quality that, while it may not atone for his other faults, will do more to justify him with his fellow men, and, no doubt, with the Great Judge than any other one thing. The man who tries to put the blame for a failure on luck, or to lay responsibility for his crime on a woman, a partner, or even the devil, has more the making in him of a cad than a gentleman, and no sort of outward veneer can redeem him in the sight of downright men.

JUST, BUT ILLOGICAL

IT is an axiom among lawyers that you never can tell what a jury will do. No one has done more to make trial by jury a farce than the lawyer himself. The examination of talesmen in important cases is carried to such extreme lengths that there have been instances where panel after panel has been exhausted and many days taken up in the selection of twelve men to try a cause. It has come to such a pass that the ideal juryman is one who has no opinions, has a limited acquaintance, and has not read the newspapers.

In the supreme court in New York the other day, twelve men were chosen to try the suit of Mrs. Rose Pugella against Julia Garrity for five thousand dollars' damages for alienating the affections of Mr. Pugella.

The jurors listened to the evidence and the speeches, and then retired. For two hours these twelve men considered the case, and then they marched into court.

"Have you agreed upon a verdict?" the clerk asked.

"We have," replied the foreman. "We find the husband guilty."

Justice Gavegan was aghast. He told the jurors the suit was that of Mrs. Pugella against Julia Garrity, and that they were not to consider the husband as being concerned in the suit. The jurors marched out and pondered deeply.

When they returned the foreman gravely announced that they had found the husband guilty of misconduct and, therefore, would fine him fifty dollars. It took a long time for the judge to make them understand that it was the Garrity woman, and not Mr. Pugella, who was being sued, and to get them to adjust their verdict accordingly.

At that, there may have been more of justice in their finding than there was when it was changed to meet the law's requirements.

THE WRITER'S DESIRE

OUT of words to shape something meritorious, with an echo of beauty, slight, and mostly neglected, but with a friendliness in it for here and there a fellow traveler. The product is like some wayside flower, of no rare beauty, but with a hint of fresh morning. Most men pass it by, and splatter dust upon it in passing, and some men trample it—but there is one and another who like it, and take a comfort because it is out of the earth, touched with dew and glad of the sun.

The Six Ages of Sandy Saunders

BEING THE LIFE STORY OF A MAN WHO HAD THE WILL TO SUCCEED

By George Randolph Chester

Author of "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford," "Sledge's Way," Etc.

II.—THE SCHOOLBOY

NELSE THOMAS pushed his way into the middle. He was a black-haired and black-eyed boy with sturdy shoulders, and when he said anything he liked to be heard.

"We'll sneak up and cut the bell rope, so it'll break in two when Old Nosey pulls it."

"It'd ring just the same," pointed out Froggy Peters, whose chief forte was logical objection. "If it only tapped once we'd have to go in."

"Le's do it anyhow!" urged Fatty Bowls, with vast enthusiasm. "Old Nosey'd get a tumble!" and Fatty, who had an active imagination for the ludicrous, laughed until the tears rolled down his face.

"I know! We'll take the rope off the bell, and tie it to the axle, and then cut it nearly in two." This thoughtful suggestion was from Billy Fletcher, a boy with a torn pocket, and a hole in his hat. Every suit in Billy's collection had a torn pocket.

Nelse Thomas had been edged out of the center. Now he bulged in again, with jerks of his broad shoulders.

"Then we'll hide the clapper!" he shouted in the exultation of his idea.

There was a pause for pleasant contemplation, during which Froggy Peters revolved the plan carefully in his mind, and examined minutely its every angle. It seemed feasible, laudable, and tidy to Froggy.

"How's that, Sandy?" he inquired, and every boy stopped talking and waited for the answer, though Nelse Thomas elbowed his way in to the center, and looked defiant, in advance.

Sandy Saunders, who had long since finished the trifling job of skate strapping, now sat on the water plug by the curb, and he had been gazing far away into space. He was a red-headed boy with remarkably clear blue eyes, and he was a much-felt force in the fourth grade. He frowned as his name was mentioned, but the frown was not one of annoyance. It was merely the frown by which he detached himself from seething thought.

"How's that?" he asked.

Nelse Thomas shoved the pale-haired boy out of the road with a poke of his elbow.

"We'll sneak up and tie the bell rope to the axle, and cut it nearly in two so Old Nosey'll get a tumble, and hide the clapper!" he shouted, and stuck his fists against his hips.

"No good," and the superior Sandy waved a brown hand, with a gesture which consigned Nelse's plan to the junk pile of absurdities. "Nosey'd run right up in the steeple and pound the bell with a club."

"We'd get our five minutes!" yelled

This series began in the first May POPULAR.

Nelse, stepping closer to Sandy, and making a personal matter of it.

That argument commanded attention, for it bore directly on a great wrong which had been committed. Deliberately, maliciously, and despotically, Old Nosey had made a mistake, and had rung the recess bell five minutes ahead of time! Certain boys had supinely trotted in; but Sandy Saunders and his intimates had gone in by the clock. Hence the trouble. They were to obey the bell, and that only!

"Five minutes won't do," argued Sandy soberly. "When you pay back you have to pay back more, don't you? Well, we have to have more. We'll wait till Hallowe'en night and steal the bell."

A profound silence greeted that announcement. The thing was so daring that it was impossible. It had never been done. The bell was too heavy. Old Nosey kept desperate watch on the schoolhouse and grounds every Hallowe'en.

"Jinks!" gasped Fatty Bowls, dreaming rapturously, his eyes nearly closed, but his thick lips curved in a fond smile.

That exclamation broke the stupor. After all, because a thing never had been done was no reason why it couldn't be done! If a thing seemed so difficult as to be impossible, there was all the more credit for accomplishing it, wasn't there? Seven pairs of eyes began to glisten, as seven active imaginations began to race. Nelse Thomas looked glum.

"How would you do it?" slowly asked Froggy Peters.

"I'll tell you." Sandy slid from the water plug and lowered his voice. Seven heads bent close to his. Nelse Thomas jostled his way squarely in front of Sandy, where his black eyes could stare straight into the blue ones. "We'll get planks and ropes, and slide the bell down the stairways. Any two of us can lift it, because Nelse and I tried to when they put up the new belfry floor. Then we'll haul it away and hide it, and the bell can't ring for a whole day, maybe more!"

"No good!" yelled Nelse Thomas, almost before Sandy had stopped speaking. "How would you get rid of Old Nosey?"

"I don't know yet," admitted Sandy, entirely untroubled.

"You can't do it, that's why?" immediately accused Nelse. "You always want to do something too big to tackle, Sandy Saunders, and you never want to do anything I say! You're always trying to show off! We can sneak out that clapper, and that's what we're going to do!"

Froggy Peters slid his shoulders in ahead of Nelse's.

"Where would we hide the bell?" he wanted to know, his large, flat eyes expanded in earnest inquiry.

Sandy looked around the school yard speculatively, and across at the baseball commons, and up and down the street. About two blocks away were some men repairing the asphalt, and a red fire was glowing under a tar kettle. Sandy's blue eyes began to dance, and he grinned.

"We'll fill it with tar and plant it upside down in the schoolhouse yard," he suggested. "We'll stick a flag in it."

"That's the stuff, Sandy!" ecstatically approved Fatty Bowls, and there was no mistaking that he represented the immediate enthusiasm of the majority.

"No good!" shouted Nelse Thomas, in his voice the bitterness of defeat. "We'd get nabbed, and arrested, and expelled, and we'd all get a lickin' at home! We can sneak out the clapper without ever being found out! Sandy Saunders, you're crazy!"

A change came over the countenance of Sandy. He had been somber in his thoughtfulness, then glowing in his creativeness, then sparkling in his enthusiasm; now his brows came down, and his mouth squared, and his jaws set,

and his shoulders hunched up, and his blue eyes screwed small.

"That's enough out of you!" he warned Nelse Thomas.

"I'll talk all I please, you!" promptly returned Nelse, hunching his shoulders on both sides to gain room, and thereby knocking the pale-haired boy into the rotundity of Fatty Bowls, who grunted loudly.

"You won't call me names!"

The ring of boys widened. They all looked interested.

"I ain't afraid to, if I want to!"

"Do it then!"

"You're crazy!"

The brown fist of Sandy Saunders shot out immediately, and grazed the jaw of Nelse Thomas. The black fist of Nelse Thomas shot back, and grazed the ear of Sandy Saunders. Then they were at it hammer and tongs; while five boys circled as they circled, their eyes wide, their lips parted, and their faces glowing with enjoyment. Froggy Peters alone was calm and businesslike. He had at once announced himself as referee, and none had disputed the office.

"Here comes Nosey!" yelled Fatty Bowls, as he ran. Fatty was too slow of foot to waste much time.

When Nosey arrived, a short, thin man with a goatee and a ferocious frown, there was not a boy in sight; only their heels were visible; whereat the ferocious Nosey laughed, and, still chuckling, went down to his furnace.

Sandy and Nelse found themselves running almost side by side, for their homes were next door. Five blocks away, up a side street, they stopped running.

"Well, did I lick you?" inquired Sandy.

"No!" Nelse's right eye was beginning to puff, and there was a trace of red on the handkerchief, which he took away from his nose. The nose, too, exhibited symptoms of swelling.

Suddenly Sandy smiled, and it was as if the sunshine had darted on his face from behind a cloud. He had escaped more than one official thrashing because of that smile.

"Aw, come on, Nelse," he said. "I know I can lick you, so what's the use?"

"You can't," promptly denied Nelse. "You got as many scratches as I have. Look at your ear!"

Sandy put his hand up to his ear, and felt it tenderly.

"That was a good wallop," he admitted. "Say, Nelse, will you do me a favor?"

"I'll bet you," the response was prompt and hearty.

"Will you help me steal the schoolhouse bell?"

"You bet!" The eyes of Nelse were snapping with eagerness. The plan had fascinated him from the first. "Say, Sandy, how'll we get rid of Nosey?"

II.

Where was Sandy Saunders! Where, on this day of all days? Why, stuck in the house, with a flannel rag around his neck, and a glass of cough mixture visible wherever he turned. That's where Sandy Saunders was! Of all the dog-goned luck!

"Mom!"

"Yes, Whittier," and Mrs. Saunders, a neat and trim young woman with an ever-present care on her mind, came out of the adjoining room and picked up the glass and spoon.

"Say, mom, my cold's almost gone now."

"Your voice does sound a little better," admitted Mrs. Saunders, filling the spoon from the glass. "If you take good care of yourself, maybe you can go to school to-morrow."

"Give me the medicine," and he held his mouth open widely. He scarcely made a face when he swallowed. "Can't I go out a little right now?"

"Certainly not, Whittier," laughed Mrs. Saunders, and brushed her fingers through his wiry red hair. "To-morrow."

"I just got to get out!" blurted Sandy. "I have to see Nelse."

"You see Nelse every day," objected his mother briskly, setting down the glass and spoon. "I'll call him in when he comes home from school."

Sandy squirmed. He looked out of the two east windows, and the two north windows, in mournful turns.

"I just got to get out," he mumbled, and there was something in his tone which gave Mrs. Saunders a hint of trouble to come. It was a cause for deep breaths when J. Whittier was firmly decided upon anything. She set her lips. She meant to be firm.

"You may dismiss the idea," she sternly told him. "You are not to go out until to-morrow, and that settles it."

She was fully prepared to meet, and cope with, and defeat an outburst of temper, and, indeed, a storm did gather for an instant in the blue eyes of her son. When he turned them upon her, however, the eyes were a clear and sparkling blue. On his lips there was the smile of sunshine.

"Aw, come on, mom," he coaxed her, and his voice was full of tender inflection. "Just a little bit." He slipped his arm around her. My, but he was getting to be a big boy! He was almost as tall as she. What a strong young arm he had!

"Now, go 'way, Whittier," she protested, panic-stricken, and tried to free herself from his dangerous embrace. "It isn't a particle of use to coax."

"Aw, yes it is, mom," he laughed, putting both arms around her. "Please! Just a little bit! Honest it won't hurt me!"

She tried again to push away. She looked down into his laughing eyes.

"You'll catch more cold."

"No, I won't, mom. I'll wear a muffler. And mittens! Come on, mom. Please!" Just plain coaxing. No attempt at argument. No expression of his resolution. He put his warm cheek against hers. "Please, mom! Just a little bit!"

Lord, she would have given him anything. He had simply pulled the heart out of her, right through her cheek.

"You must put on your rubbers," she bargained; then she laughed, and shook her fluffy hair. He gave her a big, hard hug, and ran radiantly for his muffler, and mittens, and rubbers! "You're a little fraud!" she called after him, and he threw her a mocking kiss. She knew she had been "worked," but she was happy, nevertheless.

She was astounded when he came back within a reasonable length of time; and his neck was still wrapped up!

"Pop!"

"Yes, John." Mr. Saunders, who was a tall, keen-faced man, and a capable-looking citizen, studied his son speculatively. The conversations of John W. usually had a definite aim.

"Say, pop, to-night's Hallowe'en. Can I go out?"

"Certainly not, Whittier!" hastily interposed Mrs. Saunders, loading her son's plate, and wondering, for the thousandth time, how the boy could eat so much.

"Aw, mom, it ain't fair!" protested John Whittier. "I asked pop."

"Your mother said no," immediately stated the senior Saunders, shamelessly evading the responsibility.

"Well, she never was a boy," was the argument. "She don't know what Hallowe'en is, and you do."

A half smile sprang into the corners of Saunders' mouth, and his eyes twinkled in spite of him.

"Indeed, I do know what Hallowe'en is," insisted Mrs. Saunders, half indignantly, and she, too, smiled. "I used to go out Hallowe'ens, but never when I had a bad cold."

"Throwing corn!" scorned young John Whittier. "But, mom, my cold's all gone! I went out this afternoon, and it didn't hurt me. I came right back, too, when I said I would, and I kept all wrapped up."

"So that's why you came back on the minute," and she turned thoughtful. She glanced in reproach at her husband. He had snickered.

Sandy smiled at her angelically. There were traces of dimples in his cheeks, and they seemed to twinkle like his eyes.

"Say, pop, can't I go?" and he grabbed hastily for a glass of water. He was starting to cough.

"I think not," decided his father, listening intently to the cough. "Stay home to-night, John, and I'll get you that new pair of ice skates."

"There won't be ice for a month! Say, pop, I just got to get out to-night!"

Saunders, senior, from the tone of that last remark, felt it coming! He divined that Saunders, junior, was determined on going out.

"I don't think we'd better argue about it," he said coldly. "You're not in condition to be out in this raw night air."

For just an instant he found the eyes of his son gazing into his, and they were blazing. In that instant father and son were silent, but they were penetrating deeply into each other. Somehow, Mr. Saunders became aware that he was confronting a stranger.

Suddenly the stranger disappeared. Saunders found the clear eyes of his small boy twinkling up at him, and the boy was smiling.

"Aw, pop, you wouldn't like it if you was a kid. You wouldn't think you had much of a cold. You wouldn't want the boys to call you a Molly. Why, pop, you'd sneak out of the window, if they kept you in on Hallowe'en night!"

"Are there good locks on John's bedroom windows, Jane?" asked Saunders, senior, suppressing his grin. He acknowledged freely to himself that Hallowe'en was no night to be kept in. He was startled to see the flash in Sandy's eyes, and the momentary set of Sandy's jaw. Windows could be broken.

"We wouldn't lock the shutters, Roy," reproached Mrs. Saunders. "We'd put Whittier on his honor."

"Oh, no, please don't!" protested Sandy, scared for the first time. He was afraid of his mother when she came at him with that proposition. "Say, pop, can't I go?" and he was unlucky enough to cough again.

"No."

Sandy Saunders did not flare, he did not droop, he did not smile. He steadily and painstakingly ate his dinner, leaving nothing but the crust of his pie.

"I think it's rotten," he then said, as one who has weighed, and analyzed, and judged. "I haven't done a thing but catch a little bit of a cold that don't amount to anything. If you were a boy you wouldn't stay in with it. This is Hallowe'en night, and Nelse, and Froggy, and Fat, and all the other boys'll be out, and they'll be expecting me. I don't think parents have any right to be mean. Say, pop, can't I go?"

"I told you no." Saunders had been sincerely worried about young John Whittier's cold, his ideas relating to the importance of a cold having modified considerably in the past thirty years or so. Now, however, he added stubbornness to his decision.

"All right," replied Sandy carelessly. He rose from the table, and walked calmly into the sitting room, and from there into the vestibule. Presently they heard the front door close, but he had been so deliberate about it that even then they did not realize.

Nelse Thomas bounced out of the house, and immediately looked over toward the Saunders cottage.

"Nelse!" It was a whisper from behind the shrubbery near the gate.

"Is that you, Sandy?" This was a

whisper, too. Nelse crouched down by the shrubbery. "You got out, didn't you?"

"Course I did," was the whispered reply, as Sandy dropped over the far fence; "but I'll get an awful licking."

III.

Old Nosey popped up out of his cellar, all his faculties alert. He had sensed boys! He was rather hard of hearing, but he had a separate intelligence for boys. He stood in the cover of the big chimney buttress and peered into the night. A small shadow, dim and fleeting, crossed the lower end of the school yard. Old Nosey started stealthily back along the wall. The crunch and the splatter of gravel arrested his attention. A small shadow, dim and fleeting, crossed the upper end of the school yard, and dashed around the corner. Old Nosey stood still, undecided as to which way to go.

Crash! A handful of corn against the vestibule windows. Old Nosey started toward the front of the building. He ceased to glide stealthily in the shelter of the wall. He came right out in the open and ran, his heavy knee boots, which made him seem absurdly shorter than he was, slapping loudly on the brick pavement. There was a shout, then the crow of a rooster. Two boys jumped out of the shadow of the big front steps and scudded in opposite directions, snickering in high-pitched voices, as they ran. Something hit the tin roof of the two-story wing with a loud thump. It was a stone, and it rolled noisily over and over. Old Nosey jumped sidewise, and plugged straight out into the yard away from the building. The stone bounced off the roof, and rasped into the gravel just behind him.

"Hey, you little devils!" hailed Old Nosey.

A mocking laugh was the answer, and it came from half a dozen different quarters of the grounds. There was a meow like a cat, loud and taunting; there was a bray like a donkey's; there was a bawl like a cow's; a bleat like a sheep's. Old Nosey ran up the front steps, and stood scratching his head in perplexity. A rain of corn fell round him, and he could not even tell from what direction.

Smash! A battered tin can hit just beside him, and clattered down the stone steps with a startlingly loud and continuous rattle. Ah-hah! The imp of Satan who threw that missile was too daring. He had darted from around the corner intending to add insult to injury by scurrying past right under Old Nosey's nose; but, just after he raced by, he had stumbled and fallen! Old Nosey was on him like a shot. He'd teach these young devils! He'd—no, he did not have the boy! Slippery as an eel, that fellow. He was up so quickly that it almost seemed he had merely pretended to stumble and fall. From the way he ran, and from his speed, Old Nosey suspicioned that it might be the Saunders boy. Old Nosey was determined to find out. His blood was up, I tell you! He was some runner himself!

Down across the dark school yard they raced. Twice he almost had the small miscreant, but in each case there was a duck and an abrupt side swerve, and there was momentum to be checked and direction to be altered. After the second swerve, the humiliating result of which only aggravated Old Nosey and made the chase more determined, the young villain made a bee line for the tool shed, the front door of which stood wide open. Who had opened that door!

Straight into the dark opening Old Nosey chased the fugitive, and just as he ran through it the rear door slammed in his face! He heard the hasp clank on the staple, and the pin scrape into place. The heavy wooden bar dropped

in its brackets, but Old Nosey heard that sound as he turned. The front door slammed in his face! The hasp clanked on the staple, the pin scraped through, the heavy wooden bar slammed in its brackets; then Sandy Saunders and Nelse Thomas, snickering until they thought they would burst, raced up across the yard, and were met by half a dozen small, whirling dervishes, all hopping, and howling, and happy!

"Come on, fellows!" briskly commanded General Sandy. "We got to hustle now. Fat and Froggy bring the ropes. Carpenter, Billy, Squint, hump along those planks. Cotton, you watch till we're all in, then you get right back down and keep your tar hot. Froggy and Fat, you're to stand guard. Come on, Nelse."

The army moved like clockwork. Sandy and Nelse raced back to the basement door. Close observation had taught them Old Nosey's habits. Sure enough; they found his bunch of keys sticking inside the door. They left the bunch hanging where it was, but slipped from the ring the key to the belfry tower. Back again. They unlocked the tower door, and threw it open!

It was still and close in there, and high and dark; a square well hole surrounded by short flights of steps, winding up endlessly, with landings at each corner. Over each flight was a narrow slit window, through which the dim light of the night filtered in. There were a hundred and two steps. Sandy counted them as they went up. From the top landing to the belfry floor rose a frail ladder. It seemed tremendously high up there, and it was appallingly far down, when they looked into the dark and deep well of the stairs, shot here and there with streaks of dim light.

"Gee, Sandy!" husked Nelse, and there was awe in his tone. Some trace of the eeriness of night itself was creeping in on him.

"Come on, you!" commanded Sandy, putting his foot on the bottom rung of the ladder. "Don't you say we can't do it!"

"I didn't!" denied Nelse, much aggrieved, and the eeriness of night dropped away from him like taking off a coat with the pockets full of stones.

"I didn't say you did," replied Sandy apologetically. He was up six rungs now, and going vigorously. The ladder shook under his swaying climb, but it was reassuringly tough, and Nelse stepped on the bottom rung.

"Wait a minute!" loudly whispered Nelse. "Listen!"

Sandy stopped climbing. Far down in the tower there was a steady bump, bump. It was Carpenter, and Billy, and Squint with the planks. Sandy laughed.

"Just wait till Fatty puffs up with the ropes."

Nelse laughed with him, and there was no tremor in his laugh. The tremor was gone for good.

"See that square hole in the ceiling?" Sandy pointed out, stopping halfway up the ladder. "Well, we got to take that cover off, and that's where we let down the bell to this floor."

"Gee, that'll be hard!" speculated Nelse, stopping to exercise his imagination.

"It's the easiest part," Sandy told him, reaching the top of the ladder. He had only paused once in his climb—to listen.

When Nelse arrived he found Sandy, on the stepladder kept there for use in repairs, removing the big clapper from the bell with such caution that not even his head should touch that round, vibrant rim. Nelse, with a heavy monkey wrench in his trousers pocket, started to shin up the frame standard of the bell, but Sandy stopped him.

"Go on up, but don't you unscrew a nut till I tell you," he ordered. "You might unscrew the wrong one, and then she'd all go down."

Nelse paused to reflect on that startling possibility.

"Say, Sandy, suppose'n we take off that cover in the floor and let her drop. Wouldn't that be some slam!"

Both boys, impish pygmies in this gloom, contemplated wistfully that glorious possibility, but Sandy gave it a quick negative.

"We'd wake up the town, and we couldn't get out quick enough," he sagely decided. "Besides, what we're going to do is to let this bell down to the top floor with ropes, and skid her down the rest of the way, and haul her to the creek, and fill her with tar, and plant her in the yard with a flag in her." That was his whole thought; that exact program, and it was subject to no deviations! That was why he had walked out of the house and taken deliberately into his catalogue of certainties the hardest licking of his life.

Billy Fletcher came toiling up to the top landing with a plank twice as long as his small self dragging under each arm, and as soon as he reached the top step he sat down with a grunt. The two other boys could be heard toiling up from below, and from far down could be heard other footsteps, slow and heavy.

"Geeminy whiz!" gasped Billy Carpenter. "Say, what you doin' up there?"

"Unscrewing the bolts," came the voice of Nelse.

"If you let that monkey wrench drop and hit that bell, I'll paste you!" warned the voice of Sandy.

"Say, Sandy, this is an awful job we've tackled. Geeminy whiz!"

"Come on up here!" ordered Nelse gruffly. "Don't you say we can't do it!"

"I didn't!" this indignantly.

"I didn't say you did," apologetically.

Sandy Saunders appeared at the top of the ladder.

"Say you, Billy; slant your planks on the top flight of steps, one each side, and brace the bottom ends against the wall. Tell Squint and little Carpenter —they got one apiece, ain't they?"

"Squint's got two, but one's broke."

"The blame fool! Well, tell 'em to slant the two whole ones on the second flight, and bring the broken one up out of the way; then come right on up."

A succession of gasps arrived on the top landing. It was Fatty Bowls, with a large coil of rope encircling him, diagonally, from his shoulder to his opposite hip, and fitting his rotundity with ludicrous snugness.

"We're waiting for you, Fat!" called Sandy. "Come right on up."

"Huh!" observed Fat. His eyes were rolling. He slowly lay backward until the coil of rope stood on edge. He lay a moment and gasped, then he crawled out of the coil of rope, letting it flop heavily on the floor, and he slid down three steps.

"Come back here, you Fat!"

"Huh! Huh!" gasped Fat, and slid himself down two more steps.

"I'm coming down to paste you!" called Nelse.

"Naw, don't do it," said Sandy, with the consideration which made him a general. "Fat's all in. Billy, go down and get that rope."

"Geeminy whiz!" grumbled Billy, but he went.

Froggy Peters came toiling up with a coil of rope larger than the other; but Froggy had been scientific. He had paused at each landing to take exactly eight deep breaths. He was a student of deep breathing, and he was just as fresh as when he started—or he claimed to be, which was just as effective.

"Say, Sandy," he called, as he reached the landing; "you better tell Fat to give me his whistle. He can't blow it."

"All right," agreed General Sandy soberly. "Say, don't you fellows make so much noise."

The ropes were up; the cover was off

the hatchway; five absurdly small boys sat astride the bell beam.

The bell was as heavy as any two of the boys, and it was hung on a swinging beam, with a wheel for the rope. The wheel was now tied, so the beam could not turn. The bolts which had held the bell to the beam were out. Two ropes had been passed through the holes in the cap of the bell, and an end of each had been knotted to the beam. One rope was held by Nelse and Squint; the other was held by Billy Fletcher and little Carpenter.

"Now hold her tight!" warned Sandy, with deep gravity in his tone. "If you get jerked off here, you'll go straight down through that hole, with the bell. Ready?"

"Let 'er slide!" replied Nelse confidently.

"Steady now!" warned Sandy. "Give your rope an extra wrap around the beam, Nelse. Now!"

He carefully tapped the last remaining wedge out of place, and the bell sagged down into the bend of the rope with a slight jerk.

"Hold her tight!"

Sandy slid along the beam to Nelse, and caught hold of that rope.

"Slow now!"

Gradually, gently, the bell slid down, swaying from side to side, and, jerking a little as the unevenness of the pull was adjusted, first on one side and then on the other. Breathlessly the four boys paid out the ropes. The big, dark circle slipped down through the square black hole, down, down, down! It seemed an eternity, until, at last, they heard one edge of its rim thump on the floor of the top landing, and then the other edge! The four boys sat motionless for a moment, tensed so thoroughly that they were scarcely able to move.

"Hurrah, boys; she's down!" piped the cheerful voice of Squint.

Silently, two of the boys slid down the bell frame. Sandy and Nelse untied the ends of the ropes from the beam, and followed. They replaced the hatch, and then they climbed down the ladder. Squint came last, and he came cautiously.

"Whew, but that was a job!" he said.

"Well, hustle up," directed Sandy, who knew no peace once he had started to do anything. "Grab hold of here, you fellows. The hardest job we got to do is tilt this bell. Stand on the edge here with me, Nelse. You other fellows take those ropes."

A strong pull, a steady pull, a pull all together. Slowly the clumsy thing tilted from its flatness and began to swing on its roundness as if it were a live thing, and he its trainer. Sandy jumped and guided that rope, until the flatness of the bell stood poised over the inclined planks.

"Now let her down easy!"

Easy it was. The bell tilted forward on the skids. Sandy and Nelse lifted its upper edge. The other boys held it back with the ropes, and quite tractably it slid down the first flight, coming to rest against the wall; whereupon Sandy allowed a minute or two for panting.

A shrill, clear whistle rang out from below; a policeman's whistle! General Sandy knew the tone. It was his own, which Froggy had taken from Fatty, and it was to be used only in cases of the direst emergencies.

"Old Nosey's loose!" cried Squint, and began clattering down the stairs, with no trembling whatever in his knees.

Billy Fletcher and little Carpenter, without a word, dropped their ropes and followed.

"Come on, Sandy!" hoarsely whispered Nelse, halfway down the second flight.

"Come back here!" called Sandy.

"We got to hustle, I tell you! Froggy and Fat'll keep Old Nosey chasing 'em as long as they can; but we got to be down and out before he comes back!"

Sandy stood, a despairing little figure,

at the side of the big bell. His feet would not have moved if he had wanted them to.

"I can't!" he told Nelse. "Come back here! I just can't go without this bell!"

Nelse did not hear him. He was gone!

IV.

Silence; dreary, dismal, interminable silence; silence and darkness! The blackness seemed almost to pour up out of the well hole of the ladder, and outside the whole world seemed to have gone to sleep. Far off in the country, Sandy could hear the barking of dogs. It was a woefully hollow sound! Here and there were the red glows of dying bonfires, but, for the most part, the world seemed empty, as if everybody had grown weary of it and had moved away, leaving these waning embers to accentuate the loneliness of their desertion.

Leaning far out of the belfry window, Sandy could see the still figure of Old Nosey sitting on the steps, but he, too, seemed graven and lifeless.

Time passed; endless time! Up the street a small shadow crept out from the corner of a yard, and slipped into an alley. Two other boys slipped from behind the lumber pile across the commons, and scudded away.

More time. Another boy. Then another. Small, dim shadows streaking up the street. Seven of them in all.

Eternity! Old Nosey nodded and nodded, and nearly fell off the steps. He rose and looked at his watch, and yawned. He listened to the world. It was dead. He yawned again, and went to his bed in the basement, and became dead himself.

So they were all gone home; even Nelse! Slowly Sandy went down the ladder, and slowly he stepped down the first flight, to where the bell slanted against the wall. For a long time he stood, pathetically little, and looked at the heavy, clumsy bell; and then the blood mounted into his cheeks. Involuntarily, he kicked the thing! He had suddenly invested it with a personality. It was a creature, which, by its very inertia, squatted there and defied him! With an impulsive movement, he caught hold of its black iron cap and wrenched at it. It held flatly secure in its lumpishness! It was as if the thing had mocked at him, just by its immovability.

In the darkness, Sandy's mouth squared, and his jaws set, and his eyes screwed partly shut. He stepped over and felt the planks which slanted down the second flight. They were well braced at their lower ends against the wall of the landing. He turned and examined the bell. It was a dead weight to be moved sidewise from its skids, and even if he could tilt and roll it, it would get away from him on the second flight, and go crashing down the stairs, perhaps carrying him with it.

He sat beside it, and pondered deeply, preposterously tiny, he crouched there with his gigantic intention. Suddenly he sprang at the bell, and, clinging upon its side, untied one of the ropes. He ran up the stairs with it, and dangled an end out of the belfry window. Patiently he waved and flopped it, until the knotted end shot through the narrow slit window below. He ran down and secured that end to the bell. Hurrying back up, he dropped the other end down the opposite side, and repeated the maneuver. He did the same with the second rope. He now had the bell practically suspended from four points, with the rope supported by the corners of the tower itself, and with plenty of rope to spare. He drew them as tight as he could stretch them. If he succeeded in moving the bell, it could not roll, slide, or jerk away from him, nor move in any direction except as he gave play to whichever of his ropes he chose. He had no pause now for rest. He ran up again, and brought down the broken

plank with which Squint had burdened himself.

He went behind the bell, slipped under it the end of his plank, and began to pry. It did not budge! He took a shorter bite, and tried again. The plank slipped, and he fell forward on the bell, bruising his cheek and his knee. That accident gave him strength. It gave him temper! The lumpish thing which had defied him must move; it *must* move! Again he slipped his lever under it. He spread his legs. He bent his back. He lifted and strained, until the blood pounded in his temples, until the plank cut rawly into his small hands, until his breath was hot on his lips; and still the thing mocked him!

He felt his strength going, his breath failing, his hands slipping, and, with the knowledge of this, a blind fury came to his aid. What was this thing that it should oppose him! It could not be! He would annihilate it! He would move it, if it took his life! He would move it, because it must be moved! And that was the only reason. To his strength he had given determination. Now he gave it imperious will, mad will, furious will, and, with a mighty lunge, into which he threw every atom of energy and force, and the rage of purpose which he could pluck out of the universe, he heaved forward, and the defiant weight moved! It grated upon its skids. It tilted slowly over. It slid. It swung almost free; and Sandy Saunders, dropping his lever, leaned upon it, with his face in his arms, and panted; but, through the hot breath, which came almost like heaving sobs, he laughed!

Heavy work still lay before Sandy, but it was easier work, because now he knew that he could do it. He studied the suspension of his ropes. He found how to get a purchase around the flimsy balustrade with their loose ends. Patiently he wormed the bell over the top of the second incline; then he took his planks from the first flight, and laid them in proper position on the third, and, loosening his ropes cautiously, slid the bell down the second, where it stopped, tilted at the proper angle, but held high enough for easy swinging! Sandy untied one of his ropes, and brought it down from the upper windows to the set below.

The tower door opened! Sandy, on the last flight from the bottom, leaned back in the corner, with his heart in his mouth. To have come so far! To have so nearly succeeded!

"Sandy!"

The hoarse whisper was sweeter than the voices of angels to Sandy Saunders. It was the whisper of Nelse Thomas!

"I run home, and went to bed, and skinned out of the window!" reported Nelse, glowing with joyous excitement. "I got Cotton! He was asleep down by the tar! How close can we bring the wagon? Is Old Nosey asleep? Say; your folks and my daddy are hunting you every place! They're about crazy! I guess they'll get the police after you! Say, can us three get the bell down?"

"It's here." The voice was harsh and cracked. Sandy came down that last flight, and stood where the light of the nearest arc lamp fell on him. His red hair was plastered in a tangle on his head; his eyes were bloodshot; his cheek was bleeding; his lips were black; his hands were raw; his blouse was torn and grimy; but in his eyes, bloodshot though they were, there was a glow of great happiness, and he smiled.

In the morning, Old Nosey found the schoolhouse bell planted upside down in the schoolhouse yard. It was filled with tar, and there was a flag stuck in it!

The third story in this series—"The Lover"—will appear two weeks hence in the first June POPULAR, on sale May 7th.

A Fortune in Bergonite

By J. J. Bell

Author of "Wee Macgreegor," "The Humpback," Etc.

If an invention is dangerous to the community, has the inventor any moral right to put it on the market, even if there is a fortune at stake? A story for thoughtful readers

THE open fire had fallen together in a mass of ruddy embers, for the hour was late. The only light came from a reading lamp fixed to the wall on the right of the mantel; the movable brass shade, however, was tilted sufficiently to permit of one's gaining an impression of the solid—and rather stolid—comfort of the room, which was not so much study, or library, or parlor as a combination of all three. It was a spacious room; the big double-decked table in its midst did not strike one as a clumsy piece of furniture. The two broad windows were hidden by heavy curtains falling from massive mahogany poles; now and then they swayed slightly, for a gale was blowing outside.

Came a sudden blatter of rain. The elderly man, who had been meditating or drowsing in the easy-chair under the lamp, raised his head. He peered at the clock, and, failing to read the time, consulted his watch. Thereafter he lifted the open volume from his knees, inserted a strip of newspaper "at the place," closed it, and laid it on the shelf at his elbow. He tapped the ashes from his pipe, and for a long minute remained gazing at the fire. Then, with a sigh and a yawn, he rose, placed the pipe among others on the rack against the wall, and reached out to extinguish the light.

His hand fell halfway from the switch. The door opened. A young man in evening dress entered. Even in that uncertain light you would have known him to be the other's son. Both men were clean shaven, and tall, and gray-eyed. Allowing for the marks of time, their features—and they were fine features—might have been cast in the same mold, save that the younger's chin suggested obstinacy as well as firmness of character, while the elder's mouth expressed a certain tenderness of nature which was not, apparently at least, one of the son's attributes. "The handsome Leslies" they were called by many people in Middletown.

"Hullo, David!" Leslie, senior, exclaimed. "I didn't expect you back for hours yet. Anything wrong with the dance?"

Leslie, junior, smiled a negative. "Hope I didn't startle you, father," he said; "I came in softly because I didn't want to disturb you if you had gone to bed. You were just going."

"I was."

"It isn't so late, father. Won't you smoke another pipe before you turn in?"

Leslie, senior, not displeased by the suggestion, sat down, and got pipe and tobacco jar. He smiled across at his son, who took the opposite easy-chair, and a cigarette. "And what," he asked pleasantly, "did a certain young woman say to your leaving so early?"

"Doris sent her love to you, and forgave me this once for putting business before pleasure."

"Business, my boy? What business can there be at this time of night?" The fingers filling the pipe halted; the smiling eyes were shadowed.

Leslie, junior, lifted his gaze from the glowing tip of his cigarette to his father's face. His look and his voice were grave enough now.

"The truth is, father," he said, "that I left early in the hope of finding you still up. I came home to ask you—to beg you—to reconsider your decision as to Bergstein's process. I needn't remind you that our option on it expires to-morrow, at noon. Father, for Heaven's sake, don't let this tremendous opportunity slip through our fingers!"

A short pause, and Leslie, senior, said quietly, with never a suspicion of irony: "My dear David, I am sorry you should have missed a single waltz on account of Bergstein's process. I thought you and I had agreed to let the whole matter drop. I wrote to Bergstein this afternoon, informing him that we would not exercise our option."

"There is time to cancel the letter. Why, father, it seems to me little short of criminal not to take up the manufacture of Bergonite——"

"And to me, David, it seems nothing short of criminal to manufacture a single ounce of it."

"Oh, you exaggerate the risks," the younger man returned. "Bergstein," he proceeded quietly, "was at the dance to-night. As a matter of fact I was with him most of the time. He made it quite plain that he wants money, and wants it in a hurry. He went so far as to offer to throw in his toughening process for an extra ten thousand—that is sixty thousand dollars for all his recipes and processes. In my opinion the toughening process is the most valuable invention of all. Applying it to Bergonite, we shall produce the most perfect, yet the cheapest, substitute for whalebone—and you know what that means!"

"It means a new menace to human life, David. Doubtless it means, also, a fortune to the manufacturer. But I have always held that no man has any right, for the sake of gain, to market commodities made from a substance so dangerous to the public as——"

"At this time of day the public can surely be trusted to look after itself."

"Unfortunately, the newspapers tell me quite the reverse. People to-day are making fortunes out of articles of common use which ought to be labeled 'dangerous' quite as justly as certain drugs are marked 'poison.' We don't want grandmotherly legislation, but we could do with a little more of the really fatherly sort. You and I, my son, are not going to have horribly burned men and women—and little children, too—on our consciences."

David Leslie threw his cigarette into the fire, and gave his shoulders a despairing shrug. "I still think you exaggerate the danger," he said, calmly enough. "People who won't take reasonable care when handling articles which they know to be fairly inflammable——"

"Mind you," his father interrupted gently, "I sympathize with you in your ambition to make more money."

"More money!" Leslie, junior, laughed a little harshly. "Do you know that Bergonite would mean at least one hundred thousand a year profit?"

"I shouldn't wonder if it would—and so we had better put Bergonite out of our minds." Leslie, senior, laid aside his unlighted pipe, and looked earnestly at his son. "David, is it not fine to think that among all the five hundred odd articles manufactured by Leslie & Son there is not one that can injure workman, shopkeeper, or customer? Your mother and I used to shake hands

over that, whether the year's balance sheet was good or bad."

"It looks like being pretty bad this year," said David, with unwonted sullenness.

"That's true. But you have been my partner long enough to take the bad with the good. Don't you fear for the future. Trade goes, but trade comes back. If I thought it wasn't coming back, I'd stop short, and keep what I've made. And—I've nobody but you, David. You and Doris can go into matrimony without the fears I had when I married your mother. And whatever you make out of the old business, you'll possess with a clear conscience."

David got up, and crossed to the writing table. "I'm sorry for anything I've said to hurt or annoy you, father," he said, with genuine compunction; "but—but I simply can't give up Bergonite. And there always remains the fact that if we don't take it up, some one else will, and immediately." He unlocked a drawer. "I wish to show you some examples of what can be done with Bergonite. They came to-night from Bergstein after you had left the office, and I brought them home, though I didn't then intend to trouble you with them. But as I said just now, I simply can't give up Bergonite." He had taken out a package covered with thick lead foil. Holding it, he glanced at his father. "You admit there's a fortune in Bergonite?"

Leslie, senior, was staring at the fire. He looked as if he had received a shock, and was seeking to conceal any visible effects.

"You will look at them, father?"

"Oh, yes, I will look at them, David."

Leslie, junior, opened the package, removed the inner wrappings of tissue paper, and took out three thin narrow strips of the substance called Bergonite. He brought them over to his father, and adjusted the shade so that the light fell upon them.

"You see," he said, not quite steadily, "they are ivory, whalebone, and tortoise shell. Did you ever touch imitations like them? Feel the weight of the ivory, examine the color and grain!—I wish we had daylight just now.—And look at that tortoise shell! The thing is perfectly, exquisitely done. It isn't a step in advance of the best that has been done in this line; it's the ultimate goal itself! And you know the cost of production. Why, the possibilities—no, the certainties——"

"May I break an inch off this one?" Leslie, senior, inquired, indicating the imitation ivory. There was an unfamiliar note in his voice which his son, however, did not catch.

"Certainly, father! The fracture itself will be interesting."

Leslie, senior, handed the whalebone and tortoise shell to his son. Then, having covered the ivory with his handkerchief, he managed, with an effort, to snap off about an inch. He passed the strip to David, and bade him put all away in the drawer.

David, wondering, obeyed, and came back to the hearthrug. The fire had sunk to a dull red.

Leslie, senior, leaned forward, and dropped the fragment of Bergonite on the embers.

Within the instant the room was filled with a ghastly flash, a plume of greenish smoke rose in the grate, and a spot of thick yellow fluid sizzled and bubbled amid the cinders.

"David," said the older man in a hoarse voice, "is not that enough?"

II.

There was no quarrel, neither was there any secret bitterness.

"I hope it is not going to upset your arrangements to pay me out," said Leslie, junior, a week later.

His capital in the old business, which had been growing since his assumption as partner on his twenty-first birthday, ten years ago, now amounted to something over ninety thousand dollars.

Leslie, senior, smiled rather wistfully. "The parting with the money is not the hardest thing for me," he said quietly.

"Of course, it is understood," said David, not a little moved, "that we share the profits on Bergonite."

"It is like you to make the offer, but I hope it would be unlike me to accept it."

David flushed. "You still regard the Bergonite business as wrong?"

"We have agreed to differ on that point. What I am thinking of at the moment is that you may discover difficulties in the establishing of a new business; that you may find your capital insufficient should it develop rapidly."

"Capital is easily obtained when one can show a genuine success. If Bergonite goes ahead too quickly for my bank account, it will be a simple matter to form a syndicate or, perhaps, float a company."

The older man nodded. "Then I need not worry about the financial side of your venture, David."

"You will wish me luck, father?"

"I wish you peace of mind, which is far better."

There was a short silence until Leslie, junior, said somewhat awkwardly: "I must tell you that I've decided not to set up my factory in this neighborhood. I can save money by being nearer the city." He paused. "Also it will save a lot of foolish gossip about our starting to oppose each other. . . . You agree with me?"

Again the older man nodded, but this time without remark. His face had a pinched look as he turned to look out of the office window.

"Of course there could never be any real opposition between you and me," David continued. "I should like to come home for the week-ends, if you'll have me."

"If I'll have you, David!" Leslie, senior, gave a queer laugh. "Well, I think you may risk ringing my bell. By the way," he went on quickly, "what does Doris say to your leaving Middletown?"

"Doris understands that it will be to our mutual benefit."

"But didn't I hear a whisper lately about a wedding in the autumn?"

David laughed. "I dare say you have heard a good many such whispers. However, Doris and I came to the conclusion that it would be wise to wait until the spring, when I shall have got things into full working order."

For the first time a roughness was in the other's voice. "I married your mother before I began the stiffest job of my life, and"—the roughness passed—"if I hadn't done so, I should have missed a year's happiness."

The young man was about to reply, but checked himself. He knew how perfect had been the married life of his parents. He changed the subject by asking his father's advice respecting fire insurance.

"I've been thinking of that," the latter replied. "I'm afraid you won't get a decent office to cover you except for a monstrous premium. Suppose you let me take the fire risk, and pay me at the same rate as we have been paying here. Don't refuse, David. I can't join you in your big venture; still, I should like to do something for you."

David was touched; but neither his pride nor his regard for his father would permit him to accept the generous offer. Next day he left home. It would be a month, he expected, before he could spare a week-end.

III.

Leslie, senior, missed his son sorely. He also missed his son's fiancée, who,

during the past year, had been a frequent guest in his house. A meeting with Doris in the town, a few days after David's departure, provided him with the unhappy suspicion, which soon became fixed, that she held him to blame for the breaking of the partnership, the separation from her lover, and possibly, also, for the postponement of her marriage.

"It is only on one solitary point that David and I differ," he ventured diffidently; "and we have agreed to differ, my dear."

And Doris replied, "Of course, I understand, Mr. Leslie," in a voice whose chill weariness suggested that apologies would avail him nothing.

"She thinks me a hard-hearted, pig-headed old fool," he said to himself, and only loyalty to his son prevented his asking her whether she understood clearly and precisely the nature of Bergonite.

He sought to fill the void in his business life with work, and, indeed, there was enough to do now that his partner was gone. Moreover, he was urged on by a constant yet carefully concealed dread for David's future. He took pains to give interested or inquisitive persons the impression that in all probability David would return to the old business as soon as the new one was in full operation. He welcomed his son's letters, though the contents often hurt him; he was anxious when he read of difficulties, yet filled with foreboding by the news that difficulties had been overcome. He began to age visibly. David noticed this on his first home-coming, and decided that the old man must be persuaded to retire from active business as soon as the Bergonite profits began to roll in. Which is an example of how, after half a lifetime of close communion, we may love our parents without understanding them.

David did not come home every week-end; after a time his fortnightly visits became monthly, and lasted from late on Saturday night until the first available train on Monday morning. The hours of Sunday were spent between the writing table and his fiancée's home. Leslie, senior, assured himself that he would have done exactly the same in his own day, and that he ought to be satisfied with an hour of his son's company at breakfast, and perhaps half an hour late at night.

At the end of six months the new brick-built factory, situated on the outskirts of a village some forty miles south of Middletown, began to produce Bergonite itself, and the numerous articles of everyday use for the making or finishing of which Bergonite was so eminently adapted. The buildings had been erected with an eye to the safety of the highly paid workers, and had cost more than the owner first anticipated; but it was the purchases of expensive machinery that had reduced his capital until he was considering the advisability of applying to the bank for a loan. David was more annoyed than worried. He had unlimited confidence in the future of Bergonite. At the same time, he and Doris once more decided to postpone the wedding. By the autumn David would be reaping his reward, and the honeymoon would be all the sweeter for that.

IV.

On a fine morning in September, Doris, fair and fresh, and looking all the prettier for having recently read a very hopeful letter from David, was attending to her father, who usually breakfasted half an hour later than the rest of the family. To-day he was even later, and was a trifle gruff in consequence.

A grunt from behind the morning paper recalled Doris from the future to the present. "More coffee, dear?"

"No, thanks. But I say, Doris, I

hope you'll see to it, when you've a house of your own, that your husband doesn't become a customer for his own wares."

"What do you mean, father?" She had flushed at his tone.

"Well, this fortune-making Bergonite seems to be a rather infernal sort of stuff. Here's another accident—the third I've read of this month."

She had paled at the first sentence, for, despite David's assurances, she was ever apprehensive of a disaster at the factory. But her color returned as she said—a little contemptuously, it may have been: "If people will be so careless and stupid——"

"True, my dear. But one does not look for much caution and wisdom in a child of three——"

"Oh!"

"And even mothers and nurses are but human. In this case the fire had a guard, but the child got its plaything—the handle of a toy whip—between the wires. . . . I'm sorry I mentioned it, Doris, but I think you ought to get David to close his toy department, at any rate."

She was very white now. "Oh, father, is the child dead?"

"No. But if it lives——" He checked himself for a moment. "It wasn't so much the flames as the melting stuff——" He got up, folding the paper. "I hope old Mr. Leslie doesn't see this. He was like a ghost after the last reported accident, though he pretended to be ignorant of it. Well, I must go." He came round the table and kissed his daughter. "It is not my place to interfere," he said; "but I do think it is yours, Doris."

"But, father, you encouraged David to—to——"

"Yes, my dear, I did. Naturally I wanted your future husband to make money. But I didn't realize—nor did David, I'm sure——"

"Nor I," said Doris, with a sob.

He stroked her hair until she was calm.

Doris had never known such unhappiness. She was compelled to plead indisposition to escape the questions of her mother and sisters. At night, in the privacy of her bedroom, she set herself to write to David. Dawn found her still struggling for expression, searching for words that would not wound. "Dear, I do not care how poor we shall be," she assured him at the beginning, and at the end.

V.

Doris, descending the staircase a few hours later, heard her name spoken. The voice was husky and breathless, but she recognized it as Mr. Leslie's. Oh, had he come to her about that dreadful thing in the papers? Trembling, she met him in the hall, dismissing the servant. He was looking old and worn.

"My dear," he said, retaining her hand, "I felt I had to come to you. There is news which might have been worse—much worse; still, it is bad news."

He released her hand, and gave her a telegram. She read:

> Sorry to inform you factory totally destroyed by fire early this morning. No one injured. DAVID.

"No one injured," said Leslie, senior, gently.

Doris said nothing at all, but suddenly she put her arms round his neck.

"I am taking the nine-forty train," he told her presently.

"Let me come with you," she said.

They found David at a little distance from the crowd, contemplating the smoking ruins. He smiled as some men can smile in the midst of disaster. His eyes thanked Doris for coming.

"Yes, it's hard lines," he said, "for this to have happened just when Bergonite had started to boom. Still, the

secret of Bergonite remains to me, and I dare say I'll pull through."

Leslie, senior, pressed his son's arm. "Any one from the insurance company here yet?" he whispered.

"There is no likelihood of any such person turning up," replied Leslie, junior. At that moment he pitied his father more than himself. "You see, every company offered absolutely prohibitive terms."

After a pause, the older man said hesitatingly: "What about the bank?"

"The bank refused my application yesterday. I ought to have known that the bank wouldn't advance what I wanted with the place uninsured. Don't worry about me, father. Bergonite will pull me through. It will probably mean a syndicate, which will mean only a share of the profits for me. But I'm not a ruined man." He raised his voice slightly. "What I want to get at now is the cause of the fire. So far it's a mystery, and the wreckage is still too hot to allow of any inspection. But how three separate buildings—— Well, we must have patience."

At that moment a young man standing on the outskirts of the crowd, whose glance had been frequently in the direction of David, left his place, and approached the little group of friends. He wore ill-cut black clothes, dusty as from a long road journey, a shabby soft hat, and a low collar that appeared to have been slept in. His countenance was sickly hued; his eyes were fever bright.

Addressing David, he said in a low, controlled voice: "If you will take me to a private place, I will tell you how the fire occurred. Bring your friends if you want to."

David began to ask questions.

"In a private place," said the young man, neither disrespectfully nor the reverse.

"Better hear what he has to say," murmured Leslie, senior.

Five minutes later they were in the parlor of the cottage which was David's temporary abode. David placed chairs for his father and his fiancée, and seated himself at the table, saying:

"Sit down, please, and let us have your theory of the fire."

The young man, if he heard the invitation, ignored it. Standing opposite David, his hands hanging by his sides, he said quietly: "It is not a theory. It is a fact that the three separate buildin's were set on fire about three a. m. by means of large squibs lighted and sent through the patent ventilators on the ground floors. This was done while the watchman was making his round of the fourth buildin', which, of course, you know, is merely the packin' department. I got a job there yesterday, though I'm an engineer by trade."

"How do you happen to know all this?" demanded David after a moment had passed.

"A man usually knows what himself has done."

David sprang from his chair. "You are telling me you fired my factory!" he shouted.

"I fired your factories," the young man answered, without movement or emotion. "I tramped sixty miles to do it—and to tell you why."

David sank back into his chair. "The fellow's crazy," he muttered.

"Have patience with him," whispered Leslie, senior.

Doris, trembling with anger, looked at the tired, impassive face, and said bitterly: "Will you be so good as to tell us *why*."

His eyes rested on her for a few seconds.

"She had hair like yours, miss," he said tonelessly, and returned to staring down at the table. "I dare say it was a bit longer," he went on, "for it was uncommon long—it hung to her knees. She had right to be proud of it, though her mother did say she wasted too much

time combin' and brushin' it. I was proud of it, too. I dare say 'twas the pride that put me on to buyin' her a new brush and comb for her birthday."

He paused, wetting his lips. David eyed him steadily. Leslie, senior's, fingers tightened on the arm of his chair. A faint sound came from Doris; she hid her face in her hands. The speaker resumed:

"Her birthday was last Wednesday. This is Wednesday, too. Only a week, but it seems a long time, somehow. She liked the brush and comb—imitation tortoise shell they were. She was always keen on tortoise shell, and this was a new imitation, the best I ever saw. Bergonite they called it. A splendid bargain for folks that can't afford the real thing. Anyway, Dolly was pleased."

He paused again, and there was silence. David opened his mouth, but no words came.

"I had got a raise in my wages, and I said I would take her to a movin'-picture show that night, though I was savin' up hard for our weddin'. But she wouldn't come with me until she had done her hair with her new brush and comb. And, of course, Dolly has—Dolly had to have her own way about things. Here his hands gripped the edge of the table. "So I sat down at the fire with her mother—there was no one in the house but her mother—and waited for her to do her hair. And in a little while——"

"Oh, stop!" moaned Doris.

"And in a little while," the toneless voice went on, but it was strained now, "we heard Dolly screamin'. And when we got to her she was all on fire. It wasn't the flames that did her most hurt. 'Twas the melted Bergonite. It wouldn't stop boilin'. And the doctor couldn't do anything. Nobody could do anything. She lived till five o'clock in the morning, and her mother and I were glad to see her dead. Out of her sufferin'." He held up a shaking hand. "Don't say anything. I'm nearly through. We buried her on Saturday mornin', and when it was over I set out to tramp—my ready money bein' spent on the flowers, for Dolly always was the one for flowers—to this place. For I had to do what I have done—I *had* to do it—to destroy the thing that destroyed my Dolly. Likewise I had to tell you why I did it, though I don't suppose my tellin' 'll make much difference to a fine gentleman like you. And now you can send for the police, or, if you say the word, I'll step along to the nearest station."

"Oh, David, David, there must be no police," cried Doris brokenly.

"Of course not, Doris," her lover replied through dry, white lips.

The young man turned to the girl. "Don't fret, miss. Nothin' can hurt me any more." But his voice faltered, and in the next moment his knees failed him. He slipped to the floor, his arms thrown forward on the table, his face between them. "Good Heaven!" he cried, "and we were to have been married last night."

"Leave him to me," whispered Leslie, senior, and the unhappy lovers went, with bowed heads, from the room.

VI.

A man's liabilities are seldom less than his offhand estimate; frequently they are much greater. David Leslie was unpleasantly amazed when he saw his debts on paper. But for the valuable secret of Bergonite, he must have become a bankrupt. As it was, he was forced to place his affairs in the hands of a legal firm, to whom he also intrusted the sale of all rights in the substance known as Bergonite. Very reluctantly, he handed over the secret in its tangible form—a little, stout, leather-bound volume with a lock and key, wherein were set down the various processes, more or less complicated, of

manufacture. Doubtless, when everybody had been paid, there would be a modest surplus for himself. It should be mentioned, perhaps, that he had not only abandoned the idea of a syndicate, but had rejected the offer of friends to assist him in forming such a concern.

It was a dull, chilly Saturday afternoon in late October. David was sitting with Doris in the room so familiar to his father and himself. Leslie, senior, had gone down the garden to meet the approaching letter carrier.

Leslie, junior, poked the fire somewhat viciously. "No doubt about it, Doris," he said, with a sigh, "we are going to be horribly poor."

"I don't care. We are going to be happy, aren't we?"

"I didn't want to speak of it before my father," he went on, "but I had a wire last night about Bergonite. You knew it was being put up at auction yesterday?"

She nodded gravely. Her eyes were expectant, apprehensive.

"Well, it was sold—I don't yet know to whom—at a little less than I paid for it, which means that after every one is satisfied, I'll receive only a few thousand dollars."

"Which you don't want, David," she said softly.

"I want all I can get for you," he returned savagely.

She shook her pretty head. "You don't want anything that has to do with Bergonite either for me or for yourself. Oh, I know!" She rose quickly and crossed to his side. Kneeling down, she laid her arm about his shoulders. "I *know*, David, how you have been suffering all these weeks."

"Don't!" he muttered, and touched her hair with his hand. The contact unnerved him. There had been another girl with fair, soft, lovely hair——"Oh, Doris," he groaned, "I'll never find peace. And now that cursed stuff is going to be manufactured and put on the market again! If only—if only I could have kept it, or bought it back or——"

"Hush, dear," she whispered, tears in her eyes. "Don't make me feel so helpless to comfort you. The thing is beyond us now. We can only do our best to——" She got up swiftly, and sped back to her seat.

Leslie, senior, after having difficulties with the door handle, strolled into the dusky room.

"Looks like rain," he remarked, in a tone of voice meant to be casual. "Three letters for you, David, and only one small parcel for the old man."

"But it's registered," said Doris, with a fairly successful smile.

"So it is." He turned to the table with a laugh, but his fingers shook as he cut the string and undid the wrapper. "Doris, my dear"—his voice shook also—"will you come here for a moment?" She rose instantly and joined him. He glanced over his shoulder at his son, who was absorbed in a letter. His voice fell to a whisper. "Doris, I want you to give this little book to David, and tell him to do whatever he likes—*whatever he likes*—with it. Tell him, also, that his peace is my peace, and—and all that I have is his." He pressed the soft hand that had received the little, stout, leather-bound book, with its lock and key, and went hastily out.

Only two minutes had passed, and yet life had been changed, beatified, for two people. They were in each other's arms, and if the pain of the past remained in their hearts, the cruel menace to the future was passing in the heart of the fire.

Coming in a later issue of the POPULAR: another business story by J. J. Bell called "The Grievance." It's worth waiting for.

The Man Who Disappeared

By Richard Washburn Child

Author of "The Blue Wall," "Jim Hands," Etc.

This, the second story in our moving-picture series, shows John Perriton an outcast, every man's hand against him, the doors of the world shut. And only a short time ago he had been a pampered son of society and luxury—blasé, and a bit dissipated. What brings about this tremendous change is his magnificent sacrifice of himself to save the girl he loves from pain and shame. Mary Wales' brother had become both thief and murderer. John Perriton, discovering him in the act of striking down an old servant and stealing his sister's pearl necklace, takes the guilt upon himself when the commotion brings Mary and officers of the law to the scene. Heartbroken, the girl witnesses his ignominy, listens to his damnation of himself, but points to him the way of escape by water. He takes a skiff and here we find him at the opening of the present story.

II.—THE HUNTED ANIMAL

AT dawn John Perriton stopped rowing.

For a long time he had pulled at the oars of his skiff not only to take himself from the scene of a crime, the responsibility for which he had shouldered to protect the woman he had thought he loved, but also to keep warm.

The wind, blowing from the indistinct shores and through the cold velvet of night, carried a chill which his insufficient attire allowed to strike into his bones; he had dropped the dress coat of his evening clothes, and now only a soiled, stiff shirt, and a white dress waistcoat gave protection to the upper part of his body.

He realized that such a costume was conspicuous—the worst which he, as a fugitive from justice, could wear. Should his pursuers see him even from a distance they would not be deceived by the belief that he was a native from Briarwood harbor.

"Evening clothes are not worn by carefully dressed fishermen before six o'clock," he said to himself, with a grim smile. "And they are obviously improper clothes for the flight of a supposed burglar and murderer."

The words "burglar and murderer," falling from his own voice into his own ears, brought a shock of realization. When the sun had risen yesterday he had been a young butterfly, envied because of his money and social position; his apparent right to luxury and idleness coveted by many a man of his age. He had been left alone in the world without responsibility to any one; he had not been forced to move a limb or exert a thought to maintain his right to eat and drink and dress and play and loaf as much as he pleased. Now there was no pair of eyes in the world

which did not mean danger of his capture and, perhaps, capital punishment. The name of John Perriton he never could associate with himself again. Never again could he tumble out of bed there after a gay night, whirl about the metropolis, and call for his Japanese servant, Saite, to start the water in the tub. The Von Marcos Club would never send him another monthly bill for the fat bundle of cocktail and tobacco vouchers he had signed during a wasted thirty days. His lawyers who administered his affairs and had regarded him as a young madman, would never have to endure his eccentricities again. His bankers would never again frown on an overdraft of his. A few swift-sliding hours had made him an outcast; by a piece of modern magic, following his own willingness to sacrifice himself for the protection of a woman, he had been hurled out of the lap of luxury into the brotherhood of criminals and hunted animals.

Suddenly the new idea that he no longer had money to aid him burst into his bitter reverie. He felt in the pockets of his white vest and his trousers, turning them inside out, but all the money he had carried, and indeed the watch which had been his father's were in the coat he had cast aside in his flight. He was penniless.

"I'm about as fit to *earn* money as a new-born female child," he said, with a wry face.

Then there came back to him the rapid-fire pictures of the night and the emotions and excitement. He reviewed his endeavor to save the girl he had loved from the knowledge that her brother had been a forger. He recalled being under the grip of his old companion, alcohol; he remembered how it had tricked him into a wild ride, at the end of which had come an accident which had taken him back at midnight to the home of Mary Wales, where he had surprised her brother in an attempt to steal the sister's necklace. He saw again the blows with which the brother, when discovered, had struck down the old family servant. He wondered why he had ever stepped in to take the blame for the crime, and then, with a twitch of pain in his heart, he saw, once more, the reproach upon the girl's face, the grief which came to her when she believed him, who had been her lover, guilty of a felony. He saw once more the struggle which had gone on within her before she had reached a decision to help him to escape.

Now he knew he must put out of his mind the girl who believed him so blackened with wrongdoing. All the past must go; he promised himself he would do all he could to wipe the memories of that night off the slate. This new day had thrown him out of one life into another, out of fortune into desperation, out of idleness into activity, out of society into a position where every man's hand would be raised against him.

"Life begins all over again. From this day forth, I am on my own resource," he said aloud.

Resource!

That was the word—resource! If a man can only exercise his wit faster than the rest of the world, he can accomplish anything. Perriton felt a great faith in that notion—that new conception of the way to solve life.

"And if a man is to be ever ready with a plan, no matter what circumstances threaten him or what obstacles stand in the way," he thought, "then he must also prepare his head and his body for the task. That means a new style of life for me! It means good training. And a body at top form!"

He wondered whether he would be strong enough of will power to follow out the new path which the experience of the night and the deprivation of every friend and all hope of assistance

from any quarter now presented to his view in a blaze of mental light.

"Yes, I will," he whispered to himself. "And there will be an idea for any fix if a man can only find it. And now for the new game!"

He wondered what he should do if he were caught. In that case little chance now remained that he could prove himself innocent without the testimony of the real criminal. He wondered whether, facing conviction and the electric chair, it would avail him anything to make an appeal to the brother. He believed he would remain silent and carry his self-sacrifice through to the end. He had considered, when taking responsibility for the crime, that he was a useless member of society, a consumer of luxury, pleasure, and time, and a producer of nothing; he had felt that Mary Wales' life and happiness were worth saving, and that his own were not.

Nevertheless he now considered that he would be wise to claim innocence in any case, even though he did not accuse the guilty man. If captured he could assert persistently that he was the victim of circumstances, and was not guilty of the charges for which he was now being hunted down. He wished to say it now so that in case he were captured he could claim that he fled only because the chance of proving his innocence had been so small.

After searching his pockets without finding a piece of paper, he tore a square of cloth out of his white linen shirt, and wrote upon it:

> I tried to save others from misery. As a result the crime of robbery and murder is laid at my door. With one stroke of fate I have lost everything, money, position, and friends, and circumstances are so strong against me that I fly for my life. Whoever finds this, preserve it.

He made a motion to throw that scrap onto the waters which the new sun had burnished with a copper sheen. Then he stopped and looked about on the bottom of the skiff.

Suddenly he dropped to his knees, and, reaching under the seat at the bow, brought out a bottle. Into this he thrust the white scrap of cloth, and, having corked the mouth, threw the message far out onto the undulating tide. Then, seizing the oars once more, he rowed on, directing his course near enough to the shore so that he could pick out an uninhabited strip of coast where he could make a landing, and yet far enough away so that any observer on the bluff could not see him clearly.

"I wish I had the extra morning editions," said he, recalling the table in the club on which, near the warmth of the big fireplace, the dailies were always laid. "It would be interesting reading for me!"

He knew that all the machinery by which society seeks its revenge on outcasts already had been set in rapid motion on his account. There would be pictures of him at police headquarters, a plain-clothes man would be lurking where he could watch the apartment building in which the fugitive from justice had lived, the newspapers would take his description, his history, and his likeness into every hamlet; men would be waiting for him at the docks of outgoing steamers; servants at clubs would watch the front door with the morbid hope that he would come in; the coat he had left on the shore at the scene of the crime would be marked Exhibit A; the telephone and telegraph wires would be busy darting descriptions of him through a widening zone of towns and cities; the thickets around Briarwood would be searched by posses of men and shunned by timid women and children, because it would be believed that he was hiding in the brush lands. A detachment of inspectors and State police, no doubt, had arrived already on the early-morning train; in automobiles they would go scudding about the roads

of the county; if one of them met him there would be sharp words calling for surrender; the slightest indication of resistance would mean the bark of an automatic and the dull sting of lead buried in flesh. There was misery in this reflection, but also there was the excitement of the chase which swept over him with a warm and tingling sense of pleasure.

So John Perriton rowed on toward the deserted promontory of land ahead of him, and it was not until, incautiously, he had poked the nose of his skiff into the inlet beyond, that he saw the other rowboat which had just been pushed off the beach there. A thickset man in a black derby and overcoat was at the oars.

"He saw me from the point," the fugitive gasped. "He's not a native. He's taken a boat belonging to the fishermen. That means pursuit!"

He dipped his own blades quietly, swung the skiff around, and endeavored to drive his craft behind the screens of land once more.

The other, however, had sensed his presence. Between strokes he stopped, looked about, and then shouted some unintelligible words, and shook his hand.

"Saw me!" growled John. "It's one of the law's hounds! And a race!"

The fugitive had the advantage of being lightly clothed, free from superfluous flesh, and used to handling oars; on the other hand, his pursuer, though stout and awkward, had the lighter boat, and probably was not suffering from hunger, exposure, blistered hands, and tired, sleepless body. John knew that he had much to gain by putting a long, increasing lead between himself and the police inspector, because of the excellent chance that the latter would become discouraged in the first fifteen minutes, and, giving up his prey for the time being, go back to shore to sound the alarm, and put fast power boats to work scouring the waters. Therefore, Perriton, bracing his feet, and reaching far forward each time for the catch of his blades, sent the skiff in merry time back from the point and along the course he had come during the night.

A moment later the inspector, wasting his breath on long halloos for help at the echoing woods which lined the cliff, appeared around the point, chopping the water by his frantic strokes. John smiled grimly as he realized that the space between them was widening, and that each time the other man turned about to see the progress he had made in the contest he lost still more headway.

Once the pursuer dropped his oars to pull off his coat before he went back with a desperate energy to his task. The shore slid by unnoticed by the two. Their little drama of contest was being staged without observers on the empty sea, and under the shadow of deserted rock cliff and woodland. John could hear only the cry of sea birds, the complaint of his own oars between the tholepins, and the monotonous clig-clig of the inspector's jerky strokes. He felt the dizziness of an empty stomach and an unrefreshed body, and wondered whether, after all, he could last out in an unfair contest between a light, easy-rowing boat, and his own dragging, snub-ended skiff. Then suddenly there came to him again that it might well be his life itself for which he was now suffering the pain of desperate, aching muscles. That he was now, in the world's eyes, an escaping criminal, was a fact which constantly slipped from his realization. He found it necessary to insist upon that realization becoming a part of his instinct. He felt almost that he might at any time, if he escaped the first pursuit, forget himself, and step out of hiding somewhere to ask a passer-by for a match or the time of day.

Just now the realization came sharply

to him through the zip and splash of a bullet in the wake behind him. Immediately this was followed by the ugly bark of the automatic, coming after the pellet of lead on the morning breeze. The other man had opened fire.

Without ceasing his pull at the oars, John could see the inspector, who had turned about and was training his aim for a second shot.

"Stop!" yelled the officer from afar.

John gritted his teeth. He felt the tingling expectancy of the shock of a ball plowing its way through him, but that, like other unpleasant expectancies, was the lot of an outcast. He slid off the seat into the bottom of the boat, seeking shelter, but not dropping the oars or interrupting the monotony of his strokes. The second plug of lead squealed in the air above him and was gone. Once more the inspector had gone back to his rowing.

John returned to the seat of the skiff. He looked around at the new stretch of shore. At the end of it another arm of land ran out into the water. Behind it he remembered there were marshes —long, salt, grass-covered sweeps of hummock land, where in the fall he and others from the Briarwood Country Club had often shot yellow legs and wild duck. The idea that he might now be the wild game to be shot there came to him with its grim amusement.

This thought was interrupted by the inspector, who had swung around for the second time with the ugly black automatic gripped in his stocky fist. The gun yapped again. John could not tell how close the bullet had come. His flesh squirmed, but it had not been touched.

Crack! The fourth shot spit its little tongue of flame and smoke. At the same moment one of John's oars slipped along the thwart of the boat. The bullet by evil fortune had struck the metal plate screwed into the rail, and, flattening, had cut through the hickory tholepin as if the pin had been made of cheese. A metal oarlock in place of the pin would have saved John; instead, so far as rowing was concerned, he had now become disabled!

He searched the bottom of the boat for something with which he could replace the pin. There was nothing! He knew he must keep on rowing as best he could with nothing against which to "get his purchase"; above all, he must not disclose to the pursuer that he had been disabled.

The point was not far away; and the question was now whether the inspector, who was gaining on him, could reach that point soon enough after the arrival of Perriton to prevent the latter from having time to jump ashore and dash for a hiding place in the marshes or in the woods above them.

"Time to do some thinking!" John whispered to his own ears, and then, as he reached the point too late to conceal himself, before the other would come around the corner, a plan came to his hungry imagination.

He dropped the oars into the bottom of the skiff, and stood up in the posture of one who has a revolver in hand and is prepared for defense.

The nose of the second boat appeared, the back of the inspector bending over his oars, and the ugly black automatic reflecting the rays of the early-morning sun from the stern seat.

"I've got to risk one more experiment in target practice," said John. "Good luck to me!"

The moment the inspector turned about, it was evident that he had received the very impression which John had wished to create. The officer believed that the fugitive was armed, and ready for a duel at short range. He swung the automatic around again.

John did not wait for its bark. With one flash of its ugly mouth, and thanking Heaven for his experience as a swimmer, he threw up his hands, reeled

over until one thwart of the skiff dipped under the surface, and then allowed his limp body to plunge into the tide.

The cold water was a stimulant. John swam downward until he could clutch the rockweed on the bottom, thinking of the length of time necessary for him to stay under the surface. He had inhaled as much air as possible before he took the plunge, but now, in the passing seconds, with his face pressed down into the waving seaweed, and the sand, with the shadow of the enemy's boat passing over him, and with new love of life and liberty roused by the sharp cold of the salt water, he admitted to himself that to rise to the surface within five minutes would be to give himself up, and that now his only hope lay in dragging himself and swimming into the shallow water where the marsh grass grew and where he could raise his head into the air behind its protecting screen. With a quick decision as to the shortest course, he struck out to reach shore before his aching lungs and pounding heart had borne more than they would stand. The sense of an up-shelving mud bank under him, as he scrambled along, gave him courage for another ten seconds, at the end of which he raised his head above the water cautiously, and, through the open spaces in the marsh weeds, searched about for his pursuer.

The latter was not in sight. He had beached his boat and had gone. Near at hand the thicket and the heavy woods might have offered a hiding place for him. Minute after minute passed, until John became convinced that he had worked his trick successfully, that the other had gone, and that now if he could get away it would be to leave with the testimony of the police inspector that John Perriton, the shot and drowned man, would never again be seen alive.

"What could be better?" thought he. "I had not considered that before. John Perriton must die. He must go off the face of the globe, and leave only me—a nameless man, behind!"

Slowly raising himself from the water, he clutched the tufts of grass, and pulled his body up onto a hummock. The sun was shining brightly now, and the wind rustled the dried marsh weeds. He did not see that something else rustled them. Bending low, so that he could not be observed from the higher land, he was staring out across the blue water and idly wringing the water from his clothing, unaware that the inspector, cleverer than he had supposed, was squirming toward him through the grass. The first sound of him which reached John's ears was his voice.

"Throw up your hands, you boob!" roared the officer from behind him. "You must have thought I was soft and easy. Here, put up your mitts. There's a pair of bracelets for you, and it's the chair for yours!"

John felt the cold steel on his wrists, and heard the click of the locks on the handcuffs. A desperate illness seemed to begin in the pit of his stomach, and spread through his body like a toxin in the veins; it was the sick and helpless feeling of the animal brought to bay and trussed for slaughter; it was the fainting, empty feeling of the captured fugitive touched by the law's stern hand. In it there was fear, hate, and madness. John's first instinct was to fall upon the other man, cost what it might, and wage a hopeless contest for his liberty. Innocent of crime, he none the less felt all the sensations of the guilty who have been brought down.

"Stand up and cut out all conversation," said the other. "I wish I'd locked you onto my own wrist, but you're too wet and we've got too far to go. Walk along the beach there. Go ahead!"

John promptly obeyed. For several minutes he could think only of the weapon behind, which he knew could tear a hole in his back at any moment, and

then he remembered that his need was not for reflections on his plight, but for devices to extricate himself from it. He was tempted to ask a hundred questions of his captor, but he knew that every moment before they reached other pursuers would count in a possible escape. He bit his lip and studied the ground ahead of them as they walked. Whatever he might do to effect his escape, he knew depended upon the character of the surroundings.

Two hundred yards they had gone before the inspector growled: "Turn here and climb this here bank. I'll get you out onto the wagon road, and then your last walk in the open air will be about ended!"

"Don't be so sure!" thought John, beginning the climb. The sun threw sharp shadows now, and he could see his captor was close behind him on the incline.

Suddenly, as if his foot had been thrown out from under him by a rolling stone, he struggled for his balance, leaned far over backward, and let his weight fall in the direction of the officer's knees. The two men went into a heap together, and in each other's embrace rolled down the gravel slope.

The inspector grunted out a series of oaths, but John was silent and busy looking about for a sight of the automatic gun in the jumble of arms and legs. The moment he saw its gleam he reached with his teeth for the inspector's wrist, and closed his jaws upon the spot over the arteries. The other man, roaring with pain and anger, snatched his wrist away, but, as he did so, the weapon flew far out of reach into the brush. Before it had come down out of the air, however, John, with all the power in his hands now locked together, struck at his captor. Leaping away from him, he rushed up the slope and into the woods. Once, as he turned, he saw the other hunting about for his lost weapon, but an unreasoning fear had seized the fugitive. He rushed on through the woods, his manacled hands held out before him to ward off the brush. For the first time his instincts had become those of an animal fleeing before an overwhelming dread, and he plunged through the thicket without thought of where he would flee.

After he had run for nearly a mile, he was brought to a halt by the sight of an open space, beyond which he could see a tilled field, and a farmer plodding across it, leading a cow by a short piece of rope. He might have called to him, asking him for help or directions as to reaching a shelter, but the realization that this man—this stranger—was, like every human being, now his enemy, clapped its hand over his mouth. Upon his wrists were the grim steel bracelets of the criminal. He dropped onto the ground so that he should not be seen, and crawled back into the dark forest.

The manacles upon his hands were of an old-fashioned type. The chain which bound them together was made with several links, which gave the hands some play. But none the less did the handcuffs fill him with horror and loathing. He beat them against a stone until the blood settled in dark red and purple streaks about his wrists. He tried to pull his hands out of their clasp until he panted for breath, and the muscles in his arms cried out with pain. But the handcuffs remained calm, cold, and cruel, merciless and insistent, as if they had in them a grim personality like the personality of fate or death. John got up and ran on again toward the sea.

At last he came again to the moors, stretching out like a brown carpet toward the burnished, blue water. There the breeze marked the shining surface with clouds of ripples, as a breath of warm air frosts a glass in winter. He felt that safety would lie on the shore of that stretch of open moor, because it was so flat that no one would con-

sider that a hiding place could be found on it.

He had not half traversed it, however, before he heard the baying of hounds in the woodland, and had just time to crouch down before a group of the searchers broke out from the thicket. After holding a conference, they scattered, and ran off in different directions. A moment later he heard a voice shout: "Here is his trail! Here are fresh footprints leading down into the marsh!" and he knew that unless he could find a shelter he would be caught a second time.

Five men a few yards apart, and walking in parallel, had begun their detailed search of the moor; it reminded John of a party hunting for a lost golf ball. The chance that he would be able to hide from them was very small. His black and white clothing, now torn and stained, was nevertheless conspicuous against the tan-colored grass and the brown mud which filled the wet furrows. Nothing was available with which to cover himself; no hollow offered a hiding place. John pressed his knuckles against his forehead, and the cold steel of the handcuffs against his temples.

Temptation to give up the fight almost induced him to rise and throw up his hands in token of surrender. But this meant that he would suffer a terrible punishment for a felony which he had not committed. The very unfairness of it spurred him to new efforts to effect his escape.

Trying to collect his wits, he stared about. The voices of the searchers had come nearer, but he remained quiet, using his eyes and his brain to work out a solution of his plight. Finally he moved his feet, which had settled into the waxy ooze of the marsh, and looked for a moment at the brown mud which clung to his patent-leather shoes.

The brown mud! That should be his disguise! He scooped up handfuls of the paste and slapped them about his head and neck. He worked desperately, covering the upper part of his body, his collar, his shirt, then his trousers and ankles with the soft, sticky mud of the marsh. Here and there in the furrows between the hummocks the wind had deposited loose grass and dried seaweed blown from the shore; raking up this débris with his clawing fingers, he threw it upon himself, and then, crawling several yards away where the ground was uneven, he threw himself down flat upon his face. Though he could not see himself he was certain that he must appear, even at close quarters, as a mere irregular heap of mud left by some clam digger.

Two of the pursuers approached, and one nearly tripped over John's prostrate body.

"Did you get a newspaper?" one asked.

"Yes," the other said. "They brought some out from the village. It's got the whole story—his picture, and the place where the servant was found with his head beaten in. Keep it, if you want. I'm through with it."

"George was wrong about them footprints," said the first man, rustling the paper. "There ain't any man on this marsh. He couldn't hide here. Give me a match."

There was a moment of silence; then the first man said: "Somebody's been digging here."

"Yes—for clams!" came the answer. "Let's call George and the others, and try the woods over toward Briarwood."

John heard the two move away, but he did not stir for several minutes, and then it was with the utmost caution that he raised his head. The group of searchers had gone far down the shore to climb the bank leading to the woods.

He reflected that in the end he would surely be caught if he did not succeed in reaching a point far distant from the zone in which the search would be car-

ried on. The hunger which had begun to gnaw within him, thirst which had dried and swollen his tongue, and the wet, cold clothing which kept his body weak and exhausted, began to remind him that he not only was a hunted animal, but a desperate, helpless animal as well. Food, shelter, and self-preservation had now become immediate, terrorizing problems. And, like an animal, rather than like a man, he, who had twenty-four hours ago been a well-known figure in the world of fashion and luxury, must now, covered with mud and chaff, forage and flee as a creature of the wilds.

He seized upon the newspaper which his pursuers had dropped, put aside the temptation to read it, thrust it into his shirt, and crawled out of the marsh to plunge into the woods once more. This time, turning his back upon the sea, he struck out through grove and thicket for the interior. Always he was hampered by the merciless steel bracelets, which bound his hands together. The branches of saplings caught in the loop of his arms; the handcuffs prevented his climbing a tree for an apple which still hung on a high limb, they impeded his gait as if they had become a part of a system of restraint, which extended even to his feet, and they caused an indefinable terror and resentment which, at times, because he lost control of himself, he expressed by futile endeavors to rid himself of their unrelenting clasp.

Fortunately he had chosen a direction in which the woodland stretched out with few open spaces for many miles. So John could make his journey unobserved. Before the afternoon had come, he had covered more than a dozen miles, and was reasonably certain that he had not been seen, and had left no trail behind.

Nevertheless, as he reflected, after stretching his aching, half-starved body on the ground, the game he was playing was hopeless. He could travel nowhere. He could take no train, no boat, no vehicle. He could ask no one to pry open the accursed bracelets on his swollen, purple wrists. From wind and rain he could find no shelter. The night before he had dined on terrapin and on canvasback duck; now the only food obtainable was in the roots of wild plants. He could allow himself to be seen by nobody; his very appearance, the mud-caked evening clothes, torn, soiled, his own scratched face in which the lines of expression themselves had changed since midnight, his disheveled, matted hair would be enough to start any stranger clamoring for his capture.

He forced his body to its feet, and stumbled forward again. His mind was unsteady and awhirl; at times he went forward without other purpose than to keep going, always fleeing those who sought his life, as if he expected to be so driven through infinite time and space. Finally, however, he realized that, if he were to save himself, it must be through using cleverness rather than blind flight. The handcuffs were now his greatest problem. Of course, to remove them without a key or a file was impossible.

"Impossible!" he said aloud. "Can a man ever be sure that anything is impossible?"

Wherefore, he stopped, leaned against a tree, and tried to analyze the problem of the manacles. Nothing could be plainer than that he must have assistance. It might be the assistance of persons or the assistance of things. Persons he dismissed from his mind. Beginning with a steel file, he began to list the things which could help him to rid himself of the bracelets. Then he laughed to himself because the chance of his obtaining there in the woods any of the tools which would do the work was absurdly slight. He gave up the problem with a shrug of the shoulders.

And now there came to his ears the far-away whistle of a train. The idea

that he might gain an advantage by finding a railroad right of way started him on again. When at last he had broken through the thicket which lined the track, he realized that he must expose himself only after a cautious inspection of the clearing which the railroad made between the lines of heavy, damp-smelling woods. Carefully he squirmed up the incline of the roadbed until he was on a level with the track itself, and then, with a gasp of terror, he tried to press his body into the gravel.

A face—the face of another man—pale, livid, malevolent, and in striking contrast to the green of the verdure, was staring out from the shrubbery across the track.

The other man had not seen John. Indeed, he appeared anxious for fear that some one would see him, for he parted the bushes, and stared up and down the track, craning his neck as a timid animal of the wilds before he crept out into the open.

John held his breath. The other was an unshaven young man, upon whose head an old derby hat was jammed down about his ears, and upon whose crouching body a huge overcoat hung like a nightgown. In his dirty fist he held a stick with a bit of white cloth tied at the top. The moment he stood erect and started to walk along the track, Perriton could see that the stranger was lame, and that he sought something along the railroad right of way. He would limp forward, stop, retrace his steps, and then, as if frightened by an idea, would glance up and down the long perspective of iron rails. At last, however, he pushed his stick, with its bit of white cloth, into the ground, and, clambering down the gravel, went into the brush again. John could hear him making his retreat through the undergrowth.

"The world still has its interests and its mysteries," said Perriton, sliding back into the cover of the thicket. "If I had time I should be willing to investigate this lame man's schemes and fascinating devices."

The whistle of a train, however, and the jar upon the rails recalled to him his predicament. His first instinct was to rush away from the track into the woods, but, on second thought, he merely smiled grimly and made sure he could not be seen from the windows which he knew would be full of the early suburbanites as they flashed by. He could hear the engine pick up speed as it turned into the straight measure of the road, and, as the cars whizzed before his vision, he gazed at them wistfully. He would have exchanged positions with the most miserable man on any of the seats of the coaches.

This thought was knocked flying from his mind by the parting look which he took at the receding train. The rear door of the last car had opened, and a young woman had appeared for a moment on the platform, looking right and left. She was an attractive figure, clad in a modest dress of dark color; her hair, blown from under a little hat by the rush of air, was golden, and John received the impression, in spite of the distance and shortness of time she was visible, that she had in her skin the pink of nature and good health. In her hand was a bundle, and this bundle she threw into the ditch beside the track.

"More complications," said John dryly. "And since fortune has favored me, I will appropriate that which the beautiful damsel throws from her. Yesterday I probably wouldn't want what's in it. To-day, no matter what's in it, it will be of use to me."

He hastened down the track, and unwrapped the string with which the parcel was tied. There, crushed together, but still like a gift from the gods, were ham sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs, and three bananas!

Crazed with hunger, John would have eaten them all. He had bitten at this

food like a hungry animal; he only stopped when he recalled suddenly the man with the limp and the signal stick.

"A little for manners and the lame man," he thought, putting a third of the food back into the paper, and tying it up again. "And hulloa! What have we here?"

The object was a bit of paper, on which was written:

Have got wagon for drive to city. Meet me in barn beside the road. Wait till dark.

"A little lover's meeting place," said John aloud. "Well, good luck to them. He shall have his message back in the parcel, and then I'm on my journey to Nowhere again."

He threw the bundle into the ditch, pulled at the handcuffs irritably, and started out along the direction of the railroad. He had lost track of the time. When another half hour had gone, he searched for his watch out of mere habit, but there was nothing of property remaining with him. His sole possession was a one-cent newspaper. He had forgotten that; now that his fingers touched it, he remembered that in it there would be an account of the crime for which he had had the folly to take the responsibility, and the thought caused him to sit down while there was still daylight, and spread the page open before him.

"'Congress Ready for Action,'" he read aloud. "'More War Talk in Europe.' 'Escaped Convict Uncaptured.' That's me!"

Then he stopped, puzzled.

"Escaped Convict Uncaptured," read the headlines. "Federal prisoner who broke away at Mowbrey Junction, known as Lame Buchanan, evades officers."

"Lame Buchanan!" gasped John. "Great Scott! Lame! A lame man! By thunder, I've found a brother!"

For some minutes Perriton, recalling his promise to himself always to use his wits, rolled his forehead in his hands, thinking. Then suddenly, with a half-stifled cry of victory, he set out on a run toward the place from which he had just come.

As he approached the place where the stick with the white rag still showed, he crept along cautiously until he had arrived at the spot where the bundle had been left. It was still there.

"Look out, Lame Buchanan!" said he threateningly. "If you can help me to get away, I'll make you do it."

For the second time he undid the parcel of food. He took out the note, tore the sheet in half, thrust the part on which the writing appeared into his pocket, and then, with a stub of pencil which had been left in his waistcoat, and, imitating the scrawl of the girl as best he could, he wrote a message of his own.

"There is danger. I am sending a man to you with directions at the barn beside the road," said the new message. "Do what he tells you."

John tied up the parcel once more, and crept back into the bushes to wait the return of the convict. From time to time he peered out through the gathering dusk at the thicket on the other side of the track fearful that the man might not come back. His ears were strained for the sound of approaching steps; only the noise of a chorus of insects which were braving the cold filled them with monotony. At last, from far toward the setting sun came the contralto of a locomotive whistle. Another train would pass.

He could hear the jar of the wheels telegraphed along the steel tracks, and the sound of metal on metal made him think again of the metal on his wrists. He knew what a disadvantage the manacles would be to him in any adventure with Lame Buchanan. He knew that he would have difficulty in hiding the handcuffs from the convict if he carried out his plan to trick the fellow into giv-

ing up to him the chance to ride into the city.

"Great Scott!" said he to himself. "Is there no way to be rid of them?"

The steel rails! The train wheels!

The idea flashed into John's mind after a moment of thought. It could be done! There was still time. And darkness had already settled over the track between the tall, thick growth of woods. He moved the chain between the bracelets to see how much it hung down when his wrists were placed side by side, to measure how much of that chain would rest upon the flat top of the track, when, with both hands close together on one side of the rail, he would wait for the train wheels to break a link. With an exclamation of satisfaction, he ran up the embankment, stretched his body along the outside of the track, and placed the handcuff chain on the rail top as he had planned.

His wits were working now at top speed, weighing the danger he was about to take. There was the chance of his being seen if the headlight picked him out of the darkness. In that case there would be a grinding of brakes and perhaps pursuit and capture. But this danger was not of the nerve-racking kind involved in the physical risks. The chances of death or injury which he was taking were unknown to him and terrifying. He could not foretell the speed of the train or whether the rush of its powerful oncoming would toss him from his place or draw him under the wheels. He did not know just how far the rims of the wheels came out on the rail or whether, when they had descended on the link of the chain they would drag it along and tear his arms nearly out of his body.

The train appeared as a huge snake stretching itself out of a curve. Into the straight stretch of track it came with a shriek from the locomotive. The ground and the ties upon which John was stretched shook with the weight of the onrushing locomotive and cars. He leaned his head down and sighted along the rail to see whether any projections from the engine or car trucks were near enough the ground to reach him; he looked with staring eyes for escaping steam, hot water, or hot ashes with which the engine might cover him and leave him writhing in agony. To remain as he was took all the desperate determination he could summon. Already the glare of the headlight had passed over him, and was projected far down the right of way.

At last with a scream and war of air, smoke, dust, and flying gravel, and cinders, the locomotive seemed to leap upon him.

He knew that if he flinched he would pull the link of the handcuff chain out of reach of the wheel rim which he relied on to crush it, and so give him the freedom of his arms; he knew that nothing was left for him but to trust to luck, keep his two hands close to the rail, and cling close to the earth. Then the engine and the first car truck passed over him.

He felt himself thrown by the jar of the train and by the rush of air away from the track. Headlong he went, rolled down the embankment, and, with his face stung with the flying riffraff, he sat up. The rear end of the train with its red light was disappearing down the track. But the link on the handcuff chain had been broken. His arms were free!

"Never again will I admit anything is impossible," he said. "Now I am in better condition to deal with this escaped convict—and with the world!"

He realized that he had no way of knowing where the barn mentioned in the girl's message was situated, and that to find out its location he must wait for Lame Buchanan, and then, unseen, follow him through the woods to the appointed meeting place. He had weighed the wisdom of disclosing himself to the

convict on the railroad track, but he felt that, unless he could first meet the other man at the barn, suspicions would arise in the criminal's mind which might end in consequences disastrous to John.

The minutes were passing; he wondered why Buchanan delayed coming for his parcel of food, and the message in it. The night had fallen, and time was precious.

At last, however, the sound of cracking twigs from the thicket across the track brought joy to Perriton's heart. A moment later he saw the dark form of the other man limping along as the convict searched for the bundle. John whispered imprecations at him for his slowness, but when the light of a match flared up, he could see that Buchanan had found the parcel, and was reading the message. On the pasty face of the convict there showed for a moment a smile of pleasure, and from his throat came a grunt of approval, which assured Perriton that the substitute message had carried conviction, and had done the work he had intended it to do.

Therefore, the moment the lame man started into the woods again, John, taking care to keep his distance, followed him. The way led through a growth of old trees, up the incline of a knoll, and then down into a hollow. There the convict thrust his hands into the pockets of his long, ample overcoat, and stood still, listening. Perriton dropped quietly onto the ground, and waited, wondering whether the other man had sensed his presence, and knew that he was being followed.

A second later John was reassured by the other starting on again, and again he took up the hazardous business of following the trail. He realized the probability that Buchanan was armed, and was almost certain that, if the convict discovered him, there would be a death in these silent woods. Only when the other man crawled out of the undergrowth and stepped across a roadway toward the black outlines of a shack built beside the country thoroughfare, did Perriton utter a sigh of relief.

The barn, as the girl had called it in her message, was one of those little buildings erected for temporary uses by road builders or quarry men. The large door had been nailed up when it had been deserted, and therefore John had to wait until the convict had made an entrance before he knew how one could go inside.

Buchanan crept along the side of the little structure until he had found a hole beneath its sill, and into this he wormed his body.

"He will climb up through a hole in the floor," thought the watcher. "And I must follow him. If the wagon comes before I can deal with him, my plans will be a mass of ruins."

He waited for several minutes, however, before he slid into the hole, and, then feeling above him for the open space in the floor, discovered the entrance and drew himself up cautiously.

As he did so, the convict struck a match suddenly, and thrust the muzzle of a gun into his face.

"What do you want?" came the challenge.

John knew that he must not hesitate.

"Shut yer mouth, you big stiff," he said. "Do you want to tell everybody? Didn't you get her note?"

"Whose note?"

"The girl's."

"Isabel's?"

"Yes."

"Sure I got it."

"Well, I'm the man. There's trouble."

"What's happened?" said Buchanan, still staring into Perriton's face doubtfully, while the match, nearly burned out, flared up for the last time.

"They've followed her."

"Who—the bulls?"

"Yes, they know you're in this part

of the country. We can't take you out to-night. Maybe to-morrow. But you've got to go straight from here toward the sea, and stay over away from this road for a day. Put that gun up. Every minute counts."

The other man growled some unintelligible words, and then lit the stub of a candle.

"Can't they see that from outside?" asked John.

"No. When'll I come back here?"

"To-morrow night at the same time."

John was thinking that he must hurry the other man away as soon as possible.

"Before you go, give me that overcoat," he said. "The detectives have got a description of it."

"Anything else?"

"Yes, the hat."

"All right. You know what yer doing, I suppose. As for Isabel—she's the best little wife a good-for-nothing bloke like me ever had."

"Don't stay here chewing the rag," said Perriton roughly. "Beat it while the going is good."

The other man offered his hand, but John pretended he did not see.

"Go on," said he. "How do you know they haven't shadowed me here? You're losing time."

Buchanan laughed.

"Good-by," said he, squeezing his body down through the hole in the floor. "When you leave, put the candle out."

No sooner had he disappeared than John came out of the shadow where he had been hiding, as well as he could, the costume in which he had been dressed. He put on the overcoat, jammed the hat down over his ears, and leaned against the wall so that his ear could listen as well as possible for the approach of a wagon.

Half an hour passed without a sound; then at last there came the rattle of wheels, and the patient-gaited thudding of a horse's hoof on the powdery, dusty roadway. The creak of the shafts, as the reins were pulled in, told him that the farm wagon had been stopped near at hand, and a second later he heard the rustle of the grass which grew along the wall of the shack. He knew some one was creeping above toward the entrance. Presently he heard a soft whistle.

"The girl, herself!" he said, and, knowing that she must not get a good look at his face, he shifted the position of the candle so that it would fall full upon the features of the one who would stick her head up through the floor.

She was a pretty girl—young and healthy looking. Perriton found time to admire her beauty through the fingers which he had clapped over his face, as if he were in pain.

"Gee, it's you, Harry," whispered the woman, her face beaming with sincere affection. "We haven't got no time. There's an automobile coming half or three quarters of a mile behind us, and I don't know who's in it. Look at me dressed in man's clothes—ain't that awful? Ain't you going to kiss me?"

"No, cut the talk," growled John. "Where do I ride?"

"In the big trunk on behind."

"Where you going?"

"What's the matter with your voice? What are you holding your face for?"

"I'm hoarse from sleeping on the damp ground. I've got the rheumatism in my jaws, too. Where are we going?"

"Why, I drive you as far as Matt's road house—a half a mile down here," said she. "Then a kid of Matt's drives you into the city—Max Bernstein's secondhand place, see? I've got him fixed. There won't be nothing rough. The kid thinks the big trunk is full of crockery. Ain't that a scream?"

"All right," said Perriton. "Go back to the wagon. I'll follow you."

The girl slid down through the hole, and, a moment afterward, John followed her. He was careful to imitate Buchanan's limp as he walked to the

rear of the wagon. There an old and battered trunk had been placed among several empty boxes and potato sacks of the typical market-garden hucksters.

"When the time comes—write me," said Isabel, with a break of emotion in her voice. "I'd hoped I'd have a chance to talk to you to-night, Harry."

John felt a pang of regret that he had been forced to deceive this brave, unfortunate little creature. She was so loyal to her criminal husband! And the depth of the affections and the lovable human virtues were none the less stirring because they had an underworld setting.

"God bless you, little woman!" said he under his breath, as he climbed into the spacious trunk. And, though he was an outcast, though the whole world had turned its hand against him, he felt at that moment more real brotherhood with living human creatures everywhere than he had ever in his life felt before.

The old horse had again taken up his monotonous jogging along. From the bend of the road behind came the toot of a motor car; John, through the cracks in the trunk, could see the glare of the headlight, and later could hear the rush of the machine as it swept by.

Sleep pounced on him as some mighty thing spreading a blanket of oblivion over his existence. Once he woke up to find the wagon had come to a standstill. He heard the slam of a door, the stamping of horses in some stable, and smelled the faint odor of cooking. Some one climbed onto the wagon seat, there were voices, the wheels creaked as they started forward again, and then John, vaguely wondering how he was able to feel such peace, fell back into slumber.

When he was awakened again, he had the sensation of one who is on the water. It was several seconds before he realized that the trunk, with his own weight, was being lifted off the wagon. He was swung gently forward.

The sound of soft, shuffling steps, and a constantly repeated nervous cough told him that he was not alone. The test had come. If the man who had now put his hand on the trunk's lid knew the person he was supposed to be, it would probably mean a silent struggle within the dark shop room.

The lid was lifted. John could see staring down at him the weak, empty face of a foreigner, between whose thick lips hung a lighted cigarette.

"Get up!" said the other.

John found himself in an unlighted, secondhand clothing and bric-a-brac store. Dim light from the street in front and the alley behind showed rows of grotesque clothing hung along the walls.

The other man put his loathsome face close to John's, and then said, with a sneer: "You're Buchanan, eh?"

Perriton nodded.

"Well, I've earned the money," said the "fence," shuffling his carpet-slippered feet. "I'm takin' chances, ain't I? You want a shift, eh? Then the back alley?"

John nodded again. "Look at them," he said, holding out his wrists.

"Bracelets!" the creature said, touching them with his yellow fingers and bending over them with the close and critical examination of an expert. "I see you broke the chain. But you couldn't break the bracelets themselves, eh? I can spring 'em with a hammer."

He shuffled away, to return with a wrench, which he used to hit the locks of the handcuffs three or four decisive blows. The manacles flew open. Without any comment, the foreigner threw a bundle of rags onto the bench in front of Perriton, and, with a shrug of his shoulders, went to the front door, crouched so that the lower panels concealed him, and gazed anxiously into the miserable street outside.

John understood that he was to leave his own clothing behind. After he had clad himself in the miserable outfit

which had been provided for him, and without consulting the other, he put his own evening clothes, waistcoat, and trousers, into the mouth of a round stove, and closed the door.

"There goes the last of John Perriton," said he. "And now what is in the pockets of this overcoat?"

He searched them without result until at last his fingers closed over an envelope. Then, opening the stove door, he held the paper up to the light. It was a rough scrawl, but John made out this message:

The place to go is Moreland Street. Second alley toward river. Fire escape back. Roof to scuttle by rain barrel. Knock. Three slow. Two fast. If you're caught, eat this paper. Good luck. Yours,

ONE EYE. No. 232.

John, without saying a good-by to the other man, thrust the paper in his pocket, slid the bolt on the alley store, and stepped out into the chilly air. Hugging the shadows, he took his course toward the river. Once he summoned the courage to ask a night watchman where Moreland Street could be found.

"You look as if you belong there," said the man, pointing the way.

"I do," replied John, covering the lower part of his face with his hand.

"Second alley," he said to himself, a few minutes later. "Here we are."

The place was a wilderness of empty boxes, broken barrels, and riffraff. Cats, lean, and with matted fur, slunk in the shadows. A fire escape built down the side of a warehouse ended twelve feet above the ground, but it could be reached by standing on a window sill below.

John looked about to see that no one was near, swung himself up, climbed the rusty iron structure to the roof, which he crossed until he saw, on the building beyond, the rain barrel which marked the scuttle. On the latter he rapped as the note had directed.

Several minutes passed before the sound of a lock and pushing back of the cover showed Perriton that he had not come in vain.

The face which was thrust up through the aperture was the face of a Chinaman. The skin upon it was drawn like the parchment skin on a mummy's skull. One long finger beckoned to John.

He descended, following the other man down a ladder, and into a miserable little room dimly lit by a smoky kerosene lamp. It was filled with a sickly, sweet aroma. John knew he was in one of those places known to the underworld as "hop joints." There was the low buzz of voices from the next room, and the mewing of a cat sounded from the shadows.

"Wait!" said the Chinaman, slipping through a swinging door.

John stared about. The plastered wall in front of him he could see, as he sat in the wooden chair, was covered by names scrawled in charcoal on its surface. A bare place remained. It invited him. He was the new guest. The wall asked him to register.

With an exclamation he arose, picked a piece of charcoal from the corner, and printed, "John P——" There he stopped, hesitated a moment, and finished by writing "Pottle."

John Perriton, the clubman, the luxury-loving, university-trained, well-mannered young person of fashion was dead, gone, wiped out forever.

John Pottle, the creature of the underworld, had taken his place.

"And now to climb back."

He did not see that a pair of eyes was watching him through a peek hole in the door.

The third story in the series of "The Man Who Disappeared" is called "The Come-On." It will appear in the first June number of the POPULAR, on sale May 7th.

Tadra of the Lagoon

A TALE OF THE SOUTH SEAS

By Ralph Stock

WITH a palm-leaf torch upheld in one hand, and a triple-barbed spear of native make poised in the other, Tadra, (the Dreamer), stood knee-deep in the water and waited, motionless as a statue.

Presently, a few yards distant, the dark surface of the lagoon was broken by a tiny ripple that grew in an ever-widening circle until it melted into the darkness; then, by another, nearer, the spearman, and another nearer still. Tadra looked down and saw fish—myriads of them—moving like shadows against the coral bed, or hovering, close to the surface, staring stupidly at the yellow light. But they were only osi, and the spear remains poised. Then, out of the darkness, a larger shadow took shape, hovered—moved—hovered—and the spear shot out, to stand transfixed in a gigantic saqa. Tadra knew it must be big by the chase it gave him over the treacherous coral bed. But when at last the runaway spear was caught, he merely lifted it to his shoulder and waded ashore, without troubling to examine the fish still wriggling on its points.

It was quite good sport, but the best of sport is apt to grow monotonous when indulged in three hundred and sixty-five evenings of the year—that is, to a white man. With natives it is different, and every evening, as surely as Tadra brought home a saqa on the barbs of his spear, so surely did Willie, the Solomon cook and house boy, grin from ear to ear to assure his master that it was the finest yet caught.

In the early days, Tadra used to wonder if Willie meant this, or said it to please him, but lately he had given up wondering about things at all. He accepted them.

He was "accepting" the saqa now, grilled to a turn and sprinkled with grated coconut, when Willie came as near to hurrying into the room as his master had ever seen him.

"There is a man," he announced, rigid with the importance of his news, "a white *turaga*—gentleman—coming up the beach."

Tadra slowly put down his knife and fork, and a look came into his face that Willie knew well. It was neither a frown nor a smile, but a certain tensing of the muscles about the mouth and eyes—a sudden alertness. In a wild animal it would have taken the form of pricked ears or uplifted snout.

"All right," he said, and continued to play with the grilled saqa, but only for a few moments before pushing back his chair and going out onto the veranda.

Presently there emerged into the ring of light cast on the sand through the open doorway two men, one in a battered solar topee and work-worn ducks, the other a native porter, his copper skin gleaming with coconut oil and perspiration.

"How d'you do?" said the white man, looking up. Tadra's grip on the veranda balustrade tightened, and his face turned a sickly yellow, but his back was to the light, and the other went on, in a cheerful, English voice: "Excuse the informality, but my boy told me a

turaga lived here, and my mosquito net's been either lost or stolen; would you mind lending me one for the night?"

"Come in," said Tadra.

He wondered afterward what had made him say it. As a matter of fact, the invitation was mechanical. For those few moments his thoughts had been beyond his control.

"It's most awfully good of you," said the visitor, lying at length in a wicker chair, while Willie laid a second place at the table; "my name's Bolton."

Tadra smiled. He could have laughed. Bolton!—when the eyes were the same, the small mouth and obstinate chin.

"Mine's Harwood," he lied, in return. "Around here they call me Tadra."

"Tadra!" exclaimed the other, slapping his thigh. "That's it! My boy said a Missi Tadra lived at the north end of the lagoon, and I expected a half-caste storekeeper or nigger missionary, or something. Tadra! What awful cheek!"

"Oh, I don't know," drawled Tadra; "a fellow soon gets a label in these parts; we let 'em get nearer to us than you Britishers—it pays."

His American accent was exceedingly well done. Bolton seemed about to vent his curiosity in a question, but evidently changed his mind.

"I'm after pearls," he announced abruptly.

"That so," Tadra commented; "so am I—sit in."

They talked freely throughout the meal, and afterward Bolton unstrapped a section of bamboo from his belt and poured out onto the tablecloth a stream of pearls of every size and shape.

"Five shillings each," he said. "Some are not worth twopence; others anything from a fiver to a hundred."

Tadra smiled.

"They *will* have their little old five bob, won't they?" he said.

Bolton nodded.

"As long as they don't know enough to want any more, there's a fortune in this," he replied gravely.

"Why, sure." Tadra strolled out onto the veranda. Bolton scooped the pearls back into the section of bamboo and followed him.

For a while the two men sat in silence looking out into the blue, opaque darkness that shrouded the lagoon. It was a breathless night, and the incessant cracklings of the soldier crabs scuttling over the wet sand seemed only to emphasize the intense, almost penetrating, silence.

It became too much for Bolton.

"Whew!" he breathed suddenly. "How long have you been here?"

"Five years," drawled Tadra.

The other's lips framed the word, "Why," but it was not uttered, and he relapsed again into silence.

"I'm used to it now," Tadra went on reflectively, "and it's as good as any other place I know where you can get money for nothing."

"For nothing?"

"Yep. I don't pay five bob for 'em, or go in for frills, that's all."

"Then, how——"

"I go down myself."

"Good Lord!"

"It's dead easy."

Bolton grinned across the lamplight.

"I dare say, but what's the good of it all—here?" Again he looked out across the lagoon. "Five—years!"

Tadra pried himself out of his chair and went into the bungalow, returning presently with a small tin box.

"That's the good of it," he said, lifting the lid and placing it on the other's knee.

Bolton whistled

"By gad!" he exclaimed. "You've got a young fortune here."

Tadra leaned against the veranda balustrade, looking down on him.

"Oh, I don't know," he said slowly;

"but when I've got a few more like 'em it's me for God's country!"

Bolton stayed three days—a week. Tadra found it impossible to get rid of him. And almost every hour he fancied that he saw suspicion dawning in the other's eyes. He began to wonder if he had talked in his sleep, if—— Conjectures crowded his mind. It seemed impossible that he should not be recognized, and again, impossible that he should be. There were times when the strain rendered him desperate, and he ached to take his guest by the throat, and end it.

The first day out on the lagoon Bolton had asked: "What makes you work in your clothes?" It was a perfectly natural question, but Tadra had turned on him in a flash, to be as instantly disarmed by the other's look of frank inquiry. "Mosquitoes," he had muttered, and dived from the canoe, with the snake tattooed about his middle searing his flesh like fire.

Then came the day when Bolton "went down." It was his own idea. He said he could no longer sit sweltering in the canoe opening oyster shells while another man enjoyed himself in the water; besides, he had done some plate diving at school.

Tadra, in the dripping singlet and ducks he dare not discard, surrendered the knife and rush basket, and, after the prescribed number of short breaths and the final long one, Bolton dived cleanly from the canoe's bows.

Tadra leaned over the gunwale watching the white body merge into the opalescent green about it. Down, down he went, his legs striking out, his hands outstretched, feeling their way over the rocky walls of the lagoon. Then would come a check, while the knife came into play, cutting the fibrous strands that fastened some shell to the rock, and again the pale-green body moved on.

The canoe floated on the glassy surface as though suspended in air, and Tadra found time to look about him—at the vivid splashes of red and yellow hibiscus blossom, the wild bananas, and screw pines that fringed the gentle curve of the beach.

For these few seconds he was alone again. All he had asked of life was to be left alone, and now—— By what freak of ill fortune had this man stumbled onto the remote corner of the world Tadra had come to look upon as his own? Bolton—as he chose to call himself—had run his quarry to earth without knowing it. Or did he know it? Why was he using an assumed name? Why—— The uncertainty was maddening.

Tadra looked down, suddenly realizing the passage of time. The other must have been down three-quarters of a minute, perhaps more. It was good for a beginner. The pale-green body was exactly where he had last seen it, and the legs were kicking—kicking frenziedly!

Tadra seized the water glass, and lowered it over the bows. Through it he saw more clearly. The diver's body was in a horizontal position, head downward, and the right hand was outstretched in a cranny of the rock—the fingers caught in the iron grip of a gigantic clam!

It had happened to many native divers. Tadra had often wondered if it would ever happen to him; and, now—to be alone again, and safe, quite safe! He looked up at the blue expanse of sky, across at the curve of shimmering coral sand. He dared not look down, for below, fighting for breath, was the brother of the man he had killed two years ago.

Mechanically he took up the paddle, and dipped it into the water. The canoe glided slowly away, a foot, two feet, then drifted to rest. A moment later, as though awakened from sleep, Tadra scrambled to his feet, stood for an

instant poised on the rocking bow, then dived down—and still down.

Half an hour later Bolton opened his eyes.

"What the devil——" he began.

"Lie still!" Tadra commanded.

Fever followed; a day and a night of delirium, during which Tadra heard much, but could be sure of nothing. Then came a long, peaceful sleep, and Tadra found time to sleep also.

Toward morning, when the first faint rays of the rising sun were caught by the mirror of the lagoon, and reflected through the open doorway of the bungalow, Bolton turned onto his side, and opened his eyes. Across the bare little room he could see Tadra through the mosquito net sleeping peacefully. Something about the dim figure arrested Bolton's attention. At first, it perplexed, then interested him. Tadra lay on his back, with the single sheet that covered him drawn above his chin. That was it! The beard was hidden, and all that remained exposed was the profile of the man whose photograph Bolton had carried in his breast pocket for two years.

Bolton swung onto the edge of the bed. He was weak from the fever; perhaps his eyes were playing him tricks. It seemed incredible, yet why? He slid slowly to the floor, stood swaying for a moment, then crossed the room like a shadow. Tadra slept on. Bolton lifted the mosquito net, the edge of the sheet gently, very gently, then lowered them, and crept back to bed.

No more was needed. The pajama jacket had been open, and he had seen the snake tattooed about Tadra's waist.

Most of that day he lay staring at the mosquito net, thinking, thinking, while Tadra tended him with the care of a woman. In the cool of the evening he moved out to a cane chair on the veranda, and Tadra came and leaned against the balustrade, looking out over the lagoon.

For some time the two men remained mute; then Bolton spoke. His voice jarred on the silence.

"My name's not Bolton, and I'm not after pearls; I thought you'd better know."

Tadra did not move.

"I knew," he said evenly; "you're like him a little."

The cane chair creaked.

"You knew it before you—you lugged me up?"

"I guessed it the minute I set eyes on you. Of course, I knew for certain, when you looked for the tattoo."

"You saw me do that?"

"Yes."

"And you didn't care?"

"Care!" Tadra half turned, then looked back over the water. "At first I was scared to death—then I got past it. I felt it had to come sooner or later. I never was much good at standing suspense."

There was a pause, broken again by Bolton.

"There were detectives out for over a year, and, when they failed, I said I'd go and not come back till I found you. Lord, how I hated you! How did it happen?"

Tadra turned, and looked down on the man in the cane chair with a suspicion of a sneer at the corners of his mouth.

"You've got as far as asking that," he said.

Bolton struggled into a sitting position.

"I've been a year on the trail," he said harshly, "and every day—every hour made me keener to run you to earth."

"And yet you ask me how it happened. As if you'd believe me!"

"Still, I ask you."

Tadra lounged across the veranda, and flung himself into a chair.

"We were in the billiard room—alone." He spoke in jerks. "He said something about me, and some one else; it doesn't matter who, and I hit him. I liked him, but I'd have hit any man who said it—I've got a temper. He fell backward onto something in the fireplace—that's all."

"Why did you run away?" Bolton was leaning forward, his hands clasped between his knees. Tadra mechanically rolled a saluka of native tobacco.

"They hustled me away—before I knew it—the fellows; and, once away, there was no going back. I tell you I've known for two years what it is to have killed a man." He set light to the tobacco, and a cloud of smoke hovered on the stagnant air, above his head. "They meant well. They meant to save me from—prison." He waved a hand toward the lagoon. "Does it look as if they've done it?"

Bolton did not answer.

"Well," said Tadra presently, with a certain insolence: "What about it?"

Bolton's hands were working between his knees.

"You could get out of here," he said thoughtfully.

Tadra gave a low chuckle.

"You're thinking of me," he jeered; "me!"

Bolton looked out over the lagoon. A lali sounded faintly somewhere up the beach. The soldier crabs had commenced their scuttlings and cracklings. A damp mist was creeping over the water.

"I was," he said deliberately. "I am. I believe you—and—there are other countries."

Tadra looked across at him.

"Thanks," he said; "they're not mine."

Bolton nodded, as a man who thoroughly understands.

"Perhaps," he said presently, "perhaps—later on——"

"Perhaps," Tadra repeated, "you'd better come inside, it's getting damp."

Two days later Bolton—as he chose to call himself—rounded a distant curve of the beach on the first stage of his homeward journey, and, glancing back for the last time, saw Tadra, still standing at the veranda balustrade, looking out over the lagoon.

WHAT THE BLACK CAT DID

IF you don't believe that a black cat brings good luck, the Milwaukee Press Club can show you where you're wrong. Whenever the organization gives a big entertainment, the celebrated guest, according to the custom of the club, signs his name on one of the panels in the wall.

It is a tradition of the club that this ceremony, when performed in the presence of a black cat, brings good luck to any man who has political ambition, particularly presidential ambition.

When Woodrow Wilson was governor of New Jersey, he was a guest of the club, and was asked to sign a panel in the presence of the black cat.

"Roosevelt signed one in this way when he was governor of New York," said the master of ceremonies, "and you know where he landed. William H. Taft signed one when he was secretary of war, and you know where he landed."

Wilson signed.

Leather Leggin's

By Berton Braley

WHIN you want to build a railroad through the jungle or the veldt
Where there's niver annyboddy bin before,
Why, you call on Leather Leggin's an' he hitches up his belt
An' he takes it as his ordinary chore
To go slashin' through the forests where the monkeys chatter shrill
An' the lazy snakes are hissin' down below,
Or to drag a chain an' transit over gulch an' grassy hill,
As he marks the route the right av way will go!

He's a nervy, wiry divil with his notebook an' his livil,
An' he doesn't seem to know the name av Fear,
He's a sort av scout av Progress, on the pay roll as a Civil—
Though he ain't so awful civil, if you say it on the livil—
On the pay roll as a Civil Ingineer!

Whin you need to dam a river or to turn it upside down
Or to tunnel underneath it in the mud,
Or to bore an' blast a subway through the innards av a town
Or to blow aside a mountain with a thud;
Whin you want to bridge a cañon where there ain't no place to cling
An' the cliffs is steep an' smoother than a wall,
Why, you call on Leather Leggin's an' he does that little thing,
An' then comes around an' asks you, "Is that all?"

Oh he always has a fire in his old an' blackened brier
An' he tackles anny job that may appear,
An' he does it on the livil, this here divil of a Civil—
Though he ain't so very civil, if you put it on the livil—
This here divil av a Civil Ingineer!

Now the bankers down in Wall Street gits the profits whin it's done
While us heavy-futted diggers gits the can,
But we lifts our hats respectful to the Ingineer, my son,
For that feller, Leather Leggin's, is a Man!
Yes, he takes a heap av chances an' he works like Billy Hell
An' his job is neither peaceable nor tame,
But you bet he knows his business an' he does it mighty well
An' I want to give him credit fer the same!

He is plucky—on the livil—and you'll niver hear him snivel
Though Fate does her best to put him in the clear,
He's the Grit that niver flinches—on the pay roll as a Civil—
For he's sometimes pretty civil an' he's always on the livil—
On the pay roll as a Civil Ingineer!

The Terrorists

By Arthur B. Reeve

Author of "The Silent Bullet," "The Poisoned Pen," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF FIRST PART

A secret order of anarchists are at work in New York City, and their purpose is the extermination of multimillionaires, whom they hold to be a menace to economic freedom. In some fashion they have managed to steal the formula of a powerful explosive from the government, a chemical called picral that explodes at a wireless wave. This explosive is sent wrapped like a book to two rich men, Hazleton and Burton. Usually a woman in red delivers the package. After several hairbreadth escapes, Craig Kennedy is called upon to trace the criminals. One feature of the affair interests him greatly: That the young and idealistic son of old Hazleton is a leading settlement worker on the East Side, and is mixed up with several brilliant but suspicious Russians, two in particular, Nevsky and Novikoff, who earn their living by dancing. They are also leaders in a little club of "advanced" thinkers. Under their spell Margery Dwight, the object of young Hazleton's affections, falls. The sport-loving son of millionaire Burton is also a victim to Nevsky's charms. Craig Kennedy induces Hazleton, junior, to give a reception, that he may study the crowd, especially Novikoff, who has fascinated Margery Dwight to the extent that she has promised to join him in a "trial marriage." By means of a scientific instrument, secretly installed in the Hazleton house, Kennedy in a distant room is able to eavesdrop in any part of the place. He overhears enough to convince him that the anarchists are present and are planning to hide more bombs, one to be put in the elder Hazleton's bedroom that night. The scientific detective is for a moment horrified, but determines to save the endangered millionaire at all costs.

(*In Two Parts—Part Two.*)

CHAPTER IX.

THE PHANTOM BANDIT.

MY mind was in a whirl at the unexpected and bewildering succession of events. I knew nothing of the mechanism of the bombs or of the secret means of communication the terrorists might have. Momentarily I expected to hear a dull roar from the big house across the garden only a few feet away.

What was to be done? Should we run to Hazleton, warn him? We might take the risk. I did not consider that in my haste. The sickening fear that swept over me was not fear for ourselves so much as fear that those very precious moments might be just those necessary to save him. What to do?

Kennedy hesitated not even for the instant during which these swirling thoughts coursed through my head. Quickly he pulled down a switch.

"Mr. Hazleton!" he shouted.

"Great heavens, who's that?" I heard a deep voice boom out in consternation from the vocaphone.

"Mr. Hazleton," Craig cried. "Don't be alarmed. This is Kennedy talking. Look under your bookcase. You will find a cedar box. It is a detective vocaphone through which I can hear you and which is talking out to you. I have heard something in your study tonight which——"

"Yes, yes, I see it. Go on."

"Which means that your life is threatened again. Under your desk is a bomb. There is just time to escape its effect. Quick, seize it. Unwrap it. It is harmless for the minute. Quick! Do you see those wires leading to a queer little arrangement in the yellow crystals?"

"Yes, well?" with a strongly controlled tremble in the voice.

"Pull the whole thing out. No dan-

ger. Only be quick. Throw the thing into the street. The rest is harmless now."

There was a crash of glass as Hazleton threw the cells through the plate-glass window itself.

"Yes, I did," he answered.

"There is another of those things in your bedroom. Don't go there. I'm afraid there isn't time. Call Armand. Secure him."

"All right. Armand! Armand!"

There was no answer.

Kennedy was just about to speak, when a dull roar seemed to come partly from the house, partly from the vocaphone itself, and the machine was out of business.

"The bomb in the bedroom has exploded," cried Craig.

He was running hatless from the house, into the garden.

A mere glance was enough to tell us that a whole corner of the upper story of the Hazleton house had been wrecked.

We burst into the house, breathless. Had anything happened to Hazleton in the meantime?

Kennedy tore through the hall toward the library.

"Armand," cried a voice that I recognized.

It was old Mr. Hazleton, still calling his servant.

In the deathly stillness that had followed the explosion, only the cries of some servants could be heard.

Armand was gone.

In the excitement the guests at the studio crowded out through the door into the garden. Kennedy had foreseen that it would happen as soon as the first panic was over, and, having reassured himself that Mr. Hazleton was safe, hurried out into the garden himself.

"Walter," he cried, pausing in the middle of the inclosure, "please go over and keep them back. Tell them everything is all right, that only a part of the house has been wrecked, and that Mr. Hazleton is safe. Oh, Morgan, Walter will tell you about it. Please have the people go out the other way. Your father is safe."

As briefly as I could in the excitement, while they crowded about, I told enough to satisfy them, and together Morgan and I succeeded in clearing that side of the garden. Then Morgan hurried across to join his father.

Dark as it was, I saw that Kennedy had begun to go over the garden with his pocket flash light, not waiting for daylight.

One by one the guests were now leaving by the street door, and crowding about the corner to see the wreckage, where already police had arrived and were holding back the fast-collecting crowds for which New York is famous day or night.

A low exclamation came from Kennedy.

There, in the soft earth of one of the flower beds, he had found the print of a woman's foot. I bent over, too, as he measured and examined it. From his pocket he drew the little piece of sole leather which he had found at Rockcrest.

"It fits!" he exclaimed suddenly.

Who had it been, this woman intruder, both at Rockcrest and at the town house? Was it the Red Woman, or was it another?

There was nothing more to be done that night, and, as it was late, we slept at Hazleton's studio after a long talk in which we could find out little from Hazleton about any particular guests in the throng. Inquiries from Davis Burton in the morning added nothing. Any one might be suspected, and any one might be innocent.

Kennedy had very carefully preserved the footprint in the earth, and was out in the garden making a wax impression of it, when a big limousine

drew up in front of the house, and Roger Burton, excited by the news which he had read on his way down from Rockcrest to the office, burst in.

Old Hazleton met him, and in his clear, incisive way told what had happened, including the vocaphone episode, which quite opened his friend's eyes.

"Hazleton, you're a lucky dog," gasped Burton feelingly. "Your own escape has almost knocked out of my head what I came to tell you. I, too, have a mystery—one which alarms me."

"What is it?" inquired Kennedy eagerly.

"After I left Mr. Hazleton at the club," Burton replied, "which was earlier than he left, for I am still living at Rockcrest, I went directly up there. Professor Kennedy," he said, with a half gesture of appeal, "I don't know where to turn to be safe. First they are after me at Rockcrest, then at the office, perhaps next at my own town house. Then some kind of speed demon sets fires most mysteriously. I thought I had guarded every approach, and last night they were double guarded after the latest scare. None of the men reported anything near him, yet early this morning my gardener found in the shrubbery, under my own window, an orange with a huge nail stuck into it. Fastened to the nail was this note on a tag."

He handed the manila tag to Craig, and we read in consternation:

If this had been a bomb you never would have known it. THE GROUP.

"No one heard anything at all?" emphasized Craig quickly.

"Well, one man said he thought he had heard a whirring noise early in the morning, an hour or two before daybreak, toward the river road, but he didn't see anything, and there were no marks on the road, which was just being oiled yesterday, and would certainly have shown them."

"A motor boat?" I put in.

"I don't see how any motor boat could have got past the guards along the river bank," said Mr. Burton, shaking his head doubtfully. "No motor boat was ever quiet enough to escape notice by my men. The river is very open there. No, it is uncanny—almost like a spirit hand reached out from nowhere with a threatening forefinger of warning."

We sat silent. What could it have been? So far no one had had an idea. One thing was evident. Whatever had happened to Hazleton in town, Rockcrest itself was terrorized more than ever.

"Professor Kennedy," remarked Burton, who was the first to speak, "after the experiences here last night, I think that we are all just as safe at Rockcrest—safer, perhaps. At any rate, I am going to go back there to-night, and I should advise you to do the same, too, Hazleton."

Old Mr. Hazleton appeared to be thinking a moment. "Burton," he agreed, "I think you are right. I shall go back there, too. Come over and stay with me to-night at my house, and let us trust to Professor Kennedy to protect us. Any one who can think up and use so promptly an instrument like a vocaphone, can surely guard against the dangers of Rockcrest."

Kennedy was listening, but absently, as though considering something far distant.

"Can you do that?" reiterated Mr. Hazleton.

"I think I can," replied Kennedy at length. "That is a good scheme, for both of you to go. Go up at your regular time. Don't conceal it, and don't announce it. Just let it appear natural. Only let me know a little in advance, and be very careful to instruct your watchmen that Jameson and I will be with them to-night."

"That's the way to talk," exclaimed

Hazleton, whose faith in Kennedy had grown wonderfully since our first interview. "We shall go up on the four o'clock train in the club car."

Promptly at four o'clock, following Kennedy's instructions, I was in the club car alone to accompany Mr. Hazleton and Mr. Burton on the ride up to Rockcrest, I suppose, as a sort of bodyguard. The plan was for them not to notice me, while every moment of the journey I kept watch on them out of the tail of my eye. Nothing happened, and I left them at the station, where I was to meet Craig, who was coming on a later train.

I had perhaps an hour to wait, and it was quite dark when his train pulled into the station.

"Now, I guess we'll get something on this phantom bandit," he exclaimed, as he jumped down from the baggage car.

Following him on leash was a huge, powerful dog, not exactly a collie, but somewhat resembling one, though in the darkness it looked like a big gray wolf.

"Down, Schaef!" he ordered, as the dog sniffed at me with a low growl, and showed an unpleasant interest. "This is my new dog detective. She has a wonderful record."

Rockcrest was, indeed, in arms. On both the Burton and the Hazleton estates armed men were stalking silently everywhere. We were expected, however, and had no difficulty in getting into Hazleton's, though for the life of me I could not see how any human being could have done so unbidden.

Along the slope, leading to the river, from the clearing that stretched away up to the house, Kennedy established a strict watch.

All was silent as we waited in the shadow of the thicket. Hour after hour passed without event.

At last there was a slight noise, as if there were an engine throttled down, from the river bank. Kennedy drew me back into the shadows deeper, and we peered out eagerly.

"Some one is prowling about the river bank," he whispered.

Suddenly there was a crackling of twigs in the still air in the clump of trees across from us.

Schaef, who had been near us, was sniffing keenly. From our hiding place we could just see her. She had heard the sounds, too, even before we had, and for an instant stood with every muscle tense.

Then, like an arrow, without even a low growl of warning, she darted into the underbrush and bounded across the open space.

An instant later the sharp crack of a revolver rang out. Schaef kept right on, never stopping a second, even in surprise.

We were following now quickly. In the darkness I half made out two figures retreating rapidly toward the river in the shadows of the clouds. One was a man; the other, in advance, was a woman. Schaef was almost upon them, the man in the rear endeavoring to cover the retreat. The man seemed to be working hard over the revolver, which had jammed in some way.

As Schaef sprang upon him the man seemed to snap something in the dog's face with his left hand, which he had drawn suddenly from his pocket.

It was not a gun. Yet the next moment Schaef was rolling on the ground, helpless.

A shot followed from Kennedy, but the shadows had closed over the pair, and we were too far away to see how they dodged.

Still we crashed doggedly ahead. In the silence that succeeded the shots we could hear the low, muffled purring of a powerful motor.

Then from the river we heard a peculiar whirring noise that seemed to vibrate through the air. Something

huge, black, monsterlike, slid along the water in a path of white suds and spray, rose in the darkness—from the very river itself—and was gone.

I had expected a car on the river road. What was it? I strained my eyes at what seemed for an instant like a great flying fish, with finny tail, and huge fins at the sides, and above, a body like an immense bird, or perhaps a boat, and four round wheels beneath which had evidently been under water this time.

As it ran along the water it had thrown the spray as if from a speed boat, and as it disappeared I thought I heard a mocking laugh flung back at us.

Kennedy fired wildly, but it was of no use.

"What—was—it?" I gasped.

"An air boat, a hydroaëroplane," he answered.

"Burton!" I exclaimed mechanically.

"There are hundreds of privately owned flying boats now," he answered, "wherever there is navigable water."

We looked out blankly. There was the black water, the lights twinkling on the river, and in the air was that thing.

Luck was with us when it was too late. The moon scudded out from behind a cloud for an instant. Far down the river I could descry the peculiar, birdlike figure flying through the air, streaking along as her pilot operated the stabilizers on the ends of the planes to counteract the puffs of wind off the land.

There she was—the steed of the phantom bandit, who had accomplished the seemingly impossible, an elusive speed demon, which had slipped from our very fingers, and had risen to almost instant safety.

Kennedy stifled his bitter disappointment. He had dropped on his knees beside Schaef. The brave dog was gasping.

"Is she much hurt?" I asked, almost as if the dog had been a human being.

For a moment Kennedy did not answer. He seemed nonplused until he saw on the ground, where it had escaped our attention in the excitement, a white handkerchief. He picked it up. From it fell the fragments of a little thin glass tube.

Kennedy gazed at it curiously, and sniffed cautiously.

"Kélène," he murmured. "One of the quickest and most powerful of anæsthetics. The Paris Apaches are said to have used it in some of their hair-raising exploits."

"Then our air bandit might be Armand?" I blurted out, the recollection of the conversation of the night before coming quickly to my mind.

Kennedy shrugged his shoulders noncommittally. "I wish I knew who the woman was," he said simply.

By this time we were surrounded by men from all parts of the estate, clamoring for information. Schaef had come around all right, and was now on leash again, a little subdued. Kennedy and I told as little as we could, but put the men on guard for the rest of the night, then, worn out with excitement, sought rest in rooms which Mr. Hazleton had set aside for us.

Nothing happened, and we slept rather later than usual. But in the morning we were aroused by a gentle tap at the door, and a servant told us that there was a long-distance call from the city for Kennedy.

It proved to be from Davis Burton, inquiring first for his father, then delivering a piece of news which, from Kennedy's face alone, I could see added to his perplexity.

"The men at the Meadow Laboratory have reported that the shed must have been broken open, and the air boat stolen," remarked Craig, as he hung up the receiver. "Evidently some one has been making a practice of it.

That was the hydroaëroplane that has been troubling Rockcrest—Burton's own. It wouldn't have been discovered this morning if the door had not been left unlocked. The men looked in, and the boat was gone. Half an hour later young Burton heard that his boat had been found on the river bank, a wreck, because of the tearing of the rubber-silk wings. Some of our shots must have taken effect, but not soon enough. Probably the wind finally ripped the wings under the terrific speed at which the boat was run in the air to escape."

I could only look my astonishment.

"What a diabolical scheme this is!" ejaculated Kennedy, as we finished dressing preparatory to returning to the city. "They are turning the hands of the second generation against the first. Where will it end?"

CHAPTER X.

THE TANGO TEACHER.

We came back to our apartment from our thrilling, but unsuccessful, experience at Rockcrest, to find in the mail a letter from young Hazleton, inviting us that night to attend a little play and dance at the International Lyceum, given by some Russian political prisoners, who had escaped from Siberia.

"Better come," concluded the note. "Margery, Nevsky, Novikoff, and nearly everybody at the settlement will be there, and it promises to be an event which will long be talked about in this section of the East Side."

"You are going?" I queried, after reading the letter.

"By all means," he answered. "By the way, Novikoff's classes at Port's meet in the forenoon. Suppose we just naturally happen into Port's for an early luncheon to-day. I have a little work to do at the laboratory. Meet me there in an hour."

I was not as familiar with Port's as I might have been if I had been a more assiduous cultivator of tango teas and afternoon dances. However, I will not say that it was purely in the spirit of scientific research that I met Kennedy and accompanied him to the famous hostelry just off Fifth Avenue.

We found that "the professor," as everybody seemed to call him there, had not arrived yet; in fact, was a little late this morning.

The professor's classes were held in a large private dining room on the second floor, in which was a dancing floor of limited size. Adjoining was another smaller private dining room, and as neither was now in use the doors were open, and only a curtain separated them. We entered the second room and found that it was very easy to observe what was going on in Novikoff's room by rearranging the curtains.

Kennedy rang a bell. A moment later a waiter appeared.

"You are not going to use this room immediately?" inquired Kennedy.

"No, sir."

"Well, I have an engagement with Professor Novikoff immediately after he finishes his classes. I shall wait here. Meanwhile, if I may, I will order a luncheon, which I do not want served, however, until I notify you just before he finishes. Walter, order something. And, waiter, make out the check now, and let me pay it so that I shall not have to bother with it then."

"Very well, sir." The waiter bowed.

The order had scarcely been given, and the check paid, when some one entered the next room, and walked across the floor. We peered in. It was a stranger, standing before the piano, which he had opened.

"Evidently his pianist," whispered Kennedy.

A moment later Novikoff himself entered, accompanied by one of the ladies who had been waiting for him

downstairs. He was apologizing profusely for his tardiness.

Over and over again, until it became monotonous, Novikoff went through the intricacies of some of the new dances with her. She evidently had been well schooled, for he was simply polishing them off, giving them the fetching chicness for which he was famous, at a fabulous price, no doubt, per hour.

Others succeeded the first pupil, all seeming to come for Novikoff to put on the last finishing touches. At last when the clock had swung around past the meridian, and well into the afternoon, we saw Novikoff drop with a weary air for a moment into a chair.

He had hardly done so, when we heard some one else enter.

"Ah, my dear girl," we heard him exclaim, rising quickly, "I hardly thought to see you to-day. You are tired. Sit down."

I had expected to find that it was Margery Dwight. Instead, Kennedy, who had bent over and was peering through the curtain, turned and whispered, "Nevsky."

"Yes, I am tired—of course, I am tired. I don't think I'll take any lesson to-day. I would have come earlier if I had felt more like it. But I simply had to rest an hour."

"Why—an hour?" he asked. "What has made you tired this morning?" he added, with the stress on the last two words.

"Oh, I am out of sorts. That Burton person dropped in on me almost before I had finished breakfasting. He is unbearable. I thought I should never get rid of him. He had so much to say about that hydroaëroplane of his, and——"

"Sh!" cautioned Novikoff.

"You mean there are waiters about?"

"Exactly. He is one of the best patrons here." Then louder, as if even his own caution was too much for him, he added: "Why don't you get rid of him?"

She gave a gay little laugh. "He is rich. As these New Yorkers would say, he may be a lemon, but, at least, he is a juicy lemon."

Her laugh ended cynically.

"Let me cheer you up," suggested Novikoff.

"How?"

He had risen, and was running his fingers over the keys. It was a wild, thrilling composition, which he played snatches of.

"You recall it?"

Nevsky seemed fascinated. "Shall I ever forget it?" she asked.

It seemed to me that the music in its very self expressed passion, lawlessness. It was a veritable anarchy of rhythm.

"Come, you will give it to-night—at the playlet," he said, relinquishing the piano to the accompanist. "Emile—with all the spirit that is in you. Nevsky is blue."

The almost fierce music seemed to gain the better of her. She gradually cast off her moodiness, as if it had been merely a mask which Novikoff had by some magic torn from her face. A moment later she had succumbed, and had thrown herself into the abandon of the thing.

"It is the *danse des Apaches,*" whispered Kennedy to me, as we both watched the whirling mazes and intricacies of the steps.

I watched, fascinated. The music had a popular, catchy strain, with a constant rhythm. Novikoff approached. For a moment they waltzed quietly. Suddenly he would seize her and whirl her around. He was strong, and in the ecstasy of the dance he lifted her to his shoulder. She was agile, docile, fearful, by turns. There was the play of almost every human emotion in it expressed, not by words, but by rhythmic action.

Next he took a scarf and passed it about her, holding it tight. She leaned her weight back against it. They whirled giddily about. Both seemed now intoxicated by the fervor of the dance. It was more than a dance. It was acting, good acting, as well.

He seemed to be playing the jealous lover. One could feel danger in the air. She took a few steps, as if running away. Lithe and graceful, he pursued. She was caught.

She tried to pacify him. But he became more and more violent. The dance at this point was fast and furious. As they whirled round and round the very climax came.

They paused.

With limbs interlocked, Novikoff held her with one arm, her lithe body thrown back, her long hair now streaming down from her upturned head, both arms, supine, thrown behind her.

He leaned over, his face above hers, and looked down at her.

Then with an expressive gesture he passed the long forefinger of his free hand across her full upturned throat—expressive of murder. It was but an instant—then he bent over and kissed her.

They broke apart, and stood for a moment, breathless.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Novikoff. "Never have I seen it danced as you did it just now."

"Never have I been handled so roughly as you did just now," she retorted. "You—you danced it as if you meant it."

He laughed. "That is art," he said merely. "But these Americans they would not understand. What has become of the real Apache?"

"I don't know. He has disappeared."

"The deuce!"

Kennedy had risen, and was moving toward the door, as if to get away before they observed him. I followed with a mixed feeling that, after all, it had not been all mere art.

"That man loves her—fiercely," mused Kennedy, as we tiptoed down the hall. "Did you catch the tone in which he referred to Burton, and her light retort—'He is rich?' "

Confirmed by Kennedy in my own impression, I fell to wondering how a "trial marriage," not yet entered into, was bound to end when such a rock as this lay directly athwart its course.

One thing I knew now. Burton, blasé man of the world though he thought himself, was but a pawn in the game. She was the player—not he.

"You may send up the luncheon, with the compliments of an admirer," I heard Kennedy order, catching a glimpse of the waiter. "We cannot wait any longer. Walter, I think the quicker we are away in a cab, the better."

I shall not dwell longer than necessary on the entertainment that evening, to which Hazleton had invited us. Whoever has not been at an East-Side dance has indeed missed one of the sights of the city. International Lyceum, as the hall above the International Café was called, was crowded with all sorts and conditions of men and women.

Novikoff was there, all attention to Margery, while Nevsky and Burton chatted familiarly in the offing. Hazleton, somewhat pale and uncomfortable, had come in with some other workers from the settlement. Near them I saw Emile, the pianist of the morning.

First came the play itself, not much, it was true, in a histrionic sense, but deeply affecting to the audience. Indeed, it was little more than a series of tableaux graphically representing the sufferings of the revolutionists.

The play over, the floor was quickly cleared, and the dancing began, not the dancing of Broadway, but of a character and picturesqueness all its own.

Perhaps half an hour later the "floor manager" held up his hand to announce to the wildest handclapping that Nevsky and Professor Novikoff had consented to give the Dance of the Apaches.

But it was no such wild performance as that which we had witnessed during the afternoon. In fact, it was actually tame. Even Margery applauded, and, as Novikoff joined her immediately afterward, rewarded him with a glance that brought a frown to Hazleton's closely observant face. Nevsky and Burton for the moment seemed reconciled.

The merriment was at its height when suddenly a cry rang out. It seemed to come from one of the dancers on the stairway, and I could not make out what it was.

Instantly the music, everything stopped.

Kennedy was already on his feet, pushing ahead of them all. I followed.

"What was it?" I asked a man between us.

"I don't know," he answered, elbowing ahead vigorously.

I took advantage of the openings he had made, and found myself at the head of the throng.

On the floor of the landing lay a man, face downward, no weapon apparently near him, but a pool of blood slowly widening on the floor beside him.

Kennedy was on his knees beside the man. As he turned him over I was so fascinated by the instrument, which he withdrew from his breast, that I did not notice the man's face.

It seemed to have four holes for the fingers, but was not a set of brass knuckles, for as Kennedy fitted his own fingers into place, he pressed a little button on the end of the contrivance that came next to his thumb. Instantly from the other end, which projected past his little finger, shot out a thin, steel blade like a stiletto.

"An Apache weapon," he muttered, as he handed it to me.

He had reached into the man's breast pockets and withdrawn a number of papers, which he glanced over hastily.

"An anarchist," exclaimed Kennedy, unfolding one of the papers. "See, he had been chosen to perform a removal, or rather to assist. He seems to have failed—for some reason or other."

Then for the first time I looked more closely at the face. In its worn and haggard lines, there was something indefinitely familiar. I looked again. It was Armand!

CHAPTER XI.

BY THE AID OF AN IRON-BEDSTEAD DETECTOR.

With Hazleton we walked slowly over to the settlement. It was late, but we went up to Hazleton's room to discuss the strange events of the evening.

Hazleton seemed depressed, I thought. He stood for a few moments looking out of the window at the fast-disappearing lights of the city.

"I had every confidence in Armand," he remarked, turning from the scene over which he had been brooding, and throwing himself into a chair. "In a way I feel responsible for him. It was I who took him in here. He had not been very successful in the new country after he came here. He was just another of those who had come with high hopes which had been blasted. For one thing, his knowledge of English was very slender. I taught him—at least, I put him in the way of learning from the workers here. He seemed always so quiet and eager to learn. And when my father wanted a man, I thought of Armand. To think that it all masked—this," he concluded bitterly.

"Perhaps your confidence was not so misplaced, after all," put in Kennedy quietly.

Hazleton turned quickly. "What do you mean?"

"I do not know what he may have been in Paris—perhaps it was pretty bad. But whatever it was, I don't think Armand was so lost to the sense of human gratitude as to plot against his benefactors here."

I recalled the conversation we had heard over the vocaphone, and understood what Kennedy was driving at.

"No," he continued, "Armand had been cornered. He had been trapped. He was between the devil and the deep sea. I think we are going to find that Armand fled from the house after the explosion, not because he set the bombs, but because some one was working through him closer and closer to success in the dastardly scheme of terror. The deep sea may have claimed him. I doubt if it was the devil."

There was a look of alarm on Hazleton's face.

"Then you do not think that the attempts on my father, and Mr. Burton, and others will cease with his death?" he asked quickly, as if that took away even the last grain of comfort he had been able to extract out of the situation.

Kennedy shook his head doubtfully.

Hazleton said nothing, but leaned back in his easy-chair, and gazed fixedly at the ceiling.

The Welsbach light began to flicker. Hazleton rose and tinkered with it more as if to give vent to his restless feelings by some mechanical action than for the sake of accomplishing anything.

"I shall have to call on the gas company to fix this," he remarked. "These lights seem to flicker terribly lately. I've got the best mantles. It must be in the flow of the gas. See."

He lighted another burner, and it, too, flickered.

Kennedy watched him with interest.

"The light that failed," remarked Hazleton, with an attempt at a smile.

"No," said Kennedy, watching with interest, "possibly the light that succeeded. Has it always been that way?"

"Not until very lately," replied Morgan; "and not all the time now, either."

"That's strange," mused Craig, for the moment thinking aloud. "You know in the combustion of the gas in the incandescent heat of a gas mantle, there is matter in an extremely tenuous and mobile state, sensitive to vibrations of many kinds."

Knowing nothing about the subject, Hazleton kept a discreet silence. For several moments none of us spoke. Hazleton had gone back to considering what we had just witnessed, Kennedy considering something as if it had been presented to him in a new and unexpected way.

"Hazleton," he said, at length, "I think we shall sleep here at the settlement to-night, if you can put us up."

"By all means, I should be delighted to have you," he answered with unaffected pleasure.

"If you and Walter care to turn in, go ahead," continued Kennedy, rising, and jamming his hat on. "I know it's late and both of you have been through a great deal lately. I have still a trip to make up to the laboratory. I shall be back as soon as I can. Only give me a room up here on the top floor, and be sure there is an iron bed in it."

"I think that can easily be arranged," replied Hazleton. "But can't we go along with you?"

"No need," declined Kennedy. "I shall be right back."

If Craig had had any idea that we actually would turn in, he must have reckoned without considering the effect on us of the rapid succession of mystifying events. Sleep was out of the question.

For some minutes, after he had left

us, we sat together under the flickering gaslight in silence. But it was not the nature of either of us to do that long. Gradually Hazleton unbent. It seemed as if he had reached a point where he must talk with somebody of what was, I knew already, uppermost in his thoughts—Margery Dwight.

Some one had just come in, evidently two girls, who had said a quiet good night, as they turned down the corridor in the other direction, and went to their rooms, where the women resident workers stayed. One of the voices had evidently been Margery's.

In fact, it seemed that everything about the settlement had something about it to remind Hazleton of her.

"Jameson," he remarked, after a few minutes, pulling hard on the old brierwood pipe that had been his solace in many a perplexity, "when I was still in college, that girl had a profound influence over me. Of course, I had known her ever since I was a boy, but when we went away to college, even at the infrequent intervals when we met, we used to talk of very serious subjects—for young people."

I said nothing, not that I wished to lead him along, but because I knew it would do him good to talk, and that he was not the kind to "slop over." In fact, he had not even mentioned her name, seeming to take it for granted that I understood.

'She was always in advance of me," he resumed contemplatively. "It is the nature of her mind to be radical, just as it is the nature of other women to be conservative. Women, I think, are going to be radical on some subjects and conservative on others. But Margery is a radical. Now, I am not as radical, either by training or nature, as some men. Still, I found as I followed her that I was liberal, extremely liberal. My father was furious over what he called my firebrand notions, threatened to take me out of college, and put me in the banking house, and all that sort of thing. Perhaps I was foolish."

He appeared to consider the thing dispassionately, as if he were considering some one else, not himself.

"Perhaps, after all, it is for the man who is strong, who has the power, to take his place with others of his class as a leader of men, and leave it to those who spring from the masses to carry the flame of radicalism. I don't know —frankly."

I was much struck by the seriousness of Morgan Hazleton. A great deal had been said about him in the newspapers. He had often been referred to slightingly on the one hand as the "millionaire socialist," by one set of papers, and as a kid glove, silk-stockinged reformer, the foil set forward by his father to stave off the "revolution," by another set.

To-night he appeared to me to be just a normal human being, who found life intensely interesting and worth living, and was under no illusions about the possibilities of changing human nature. Progress, to him, at least, did not mean going upstairs twenty steps at a time.

Hazleton had dropped into a brown study. He had said not a word of love. I doubt whether he would have disclosed the keenness of his feelings on that point to any one. I sat in half reverie myself.

Kennedy's quick step on the stairs roused us both. He had returned a little sooner than we had expected. As I looked up I saw that the light was still flickering.

He had brought with him what looked like a small incandescent lamp, with a plate and grid of platinum sealed in the bulb and connected with the exterior by platinum wires. Inside was a filament of tantalum, which glowed by means of a small storage battery.

"Show me my room, Hazleton," he

asked, as we regarded the apparatus curiously.

Hazleton led the way across the hall. No sooner had he reached the room than Kennedy began fastening the apparatus by wires to the brass bed, much to our amazement.

"It was the flickering light that first suggested it," he remarked, as he worked. "Ah—I was right, the light gave me the clew. Some form of wireless energy is being used."

"How do you know?" asked Hazleton. "What is that?"

"An audion," replied Craig; "a wireless detector invented by Doctor Lee de Forest. Electric-wave detectors, the most delicate part of the wireless receiving set, are of the utmost sensitiveness nowadays. There are a number of different types known. With this audion, I could get a message on a rainy night from any station within a hundred miles simply by attaching the instrument to the steel rod of an umbrella held in my hand over my head. A battery and a rheostat capable of very fine adjustment are necessary to the operation of this detector. When a current to light the filament is turned on, the detector is ready for business, requiring no adjustments of crystals and points, wire, or acid. It can be used to receive from all systems of transmission—in fact, will detect any wireless wave from whatever source it is produced."

"Kennedy," exclaimed Hazleton, "you are positively uncanny."

He had bent down, and was watching the operation of the audion intently.

"But the bed," I put in, not so much mystified by the apparatus, which looked as if it might be capable of doing all he said, as by the apparent simplicity of his arrangements.

"Oh," he laughed, "didn't you know that that could be done? With the proper kind of apparatus even an iron bed can be used as an 'aërial.' In wireless telegraphy the signals are not sent in one direction, but in all, so that a person anywhere within range of the ethereal disturbance can get them if he has the necessary receiving apparatus. This apparatus need not be so elaborate and expensive as used to be thought, if a sensitive detector is employed. Why, I half suspect I might detect these impulses by means of a dozen feet of copper wire, say number eighteen, stretched across this room and grounded with a water or gas pipe. I might even use an iron bed without a wire mattress. You see, there are lots of things you can do, just by hitching your wagon to a bedstead or a gas pipe without waiting to hitch it to a star."

"What are they saying?" asked Hazleton, much impressed.

"Saying?" repeated Kennedy. "I beg your pardon for implying that messages were being sent. I might get them, if they were, but in this case it seems that messages are not being sent. No, as far as I can make out it is merely a sort of wireless-electrical impulse, perhaps a new ray or wave—some form of energy, anyhow, which is being radiated from somewhere."

"That is," I cried excitedly, "you mean that some one with this new, weird wireless power is sitting off in absolute secrecy and safety somewhere, operating the final impulse which explodes the infernal machines which his dupes, perhaps innocently, perhaps knowingly, leave for him?"

"Just that," answered Kennedy. "You catch the idea precisely. I have long suspected that something of the sort was going on, but as often as I have tried I have not been able to get one step nearer proving it finally, or nearer in the search for the source. Now, fortunately, it seems as if we had made some progress, small as it may seem."

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Hazleton suddenly, as the significance of the

discovery dawned on him, and he made the first application of it which he did of everything now. He sank his head in his hands. Instantly it occurred to me of what he was thinking, after our recent conversation. "Margery—she may be scattering these engines of death—unwittingly," he added, in desperation, almost forcing the word in his agony of spirit, trying to put on it the best interpretation that he could.

I watched the audion as it recorded the invisible impulses that throbbed through the air about us.

Hazleton, who was watching, too, put in words the thought which was already passing through my mind.

"It is still going," he exclaimed. "What dastardly scheme can it be that the fellow has for to-night?"

"Perhaps they are only experimenting with it, testing it," I urged half-heartedly. "I wonder who the fellow can be—some mechanical genius?"

Hazleton had leaped up, and almost on a run gone back to his own study. Quickly, in spite of the lateness of the hour, he called up both his own home in the city and at Rockcrest, then Burton's. After considerable difficulty, he succeeded in getting replies from the sleepy servants at all three places.

"Nothing has happened, as far as I can learn, to-night," he reported, with an air of relief, as he rejoined us in our room, where Kennedy was still observing the working of the detector.

"Perhaps Walter was right," commented Kennedy, "and they are merely testing it out."

"Then they must be preparing something in the future, at least," persisted Hazleton. "We must be on our guard."

Suddenly the audion stopped. Evidently the arch terrorist, whoever this mysterious far-distant operator of death might be, had had enough of his fearsome sport for the night.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE BOMB FACTORY.

Just before we turned in, Kennedy had dispatched a brief note to Burke, of the secret service. He came promptly in the morning, and Kennedy asked to have him shown into our room immediately. Once awake, with no matter how many hours of sleep lost, Craig was wholly awake and eager to take up the work where he had left off only a short time before. I was still yawning when Burke entered.

"Well," cried a hearty voice, "I thought you had forgotten all about me."

"Not a bit of it," said Kennedy. "How goes the case about the loss of the secret of picral?"

Burke's face betrayed nothing, though he looked at us keenly to see whether we were trying to "pump" him. "I thought you had asked me to call about that," he smiled simply.

"Then you have made no progress?" asked Craig.

"I didn't say so," he evaded.

"But I know you'd have said something if you had," replied Craig.

Burke laughed. "Yes," he admitted, "I should have kept you 'wised up,' if I had anything much to report. But, to tell you the truth, I'm very little farther along than before, and Nolan has made no progress, either. We know, of course, that some anarchist has got it, but who stole it and which of them is using it——" He threw up his hands with a gesture of despair, as if it were an insoluble mystery.

"Well," remarked Craig, at length, "I shall be perfectly frank with you, Burke. I had nothing definite to report, myself. But now I think I have a clew."

"Yes?" prompted the secret-service man eagerly.

"But you have got to help me to run it down if it is to amount to anything," added Kennedy.

"Gladly. What is it?"

"Well, you know the new radio law, which has just gone into effect?"

"Well?" asked Burke, his face falling momentarily. "What has that to do with picral?"

"Nothing directly. Everything indirectly, if I am correct."

Burke shot a quick glance from Kennedy to me. "I think I get you," he put in, with a dubious smile. "I was wondering what the new radio law had to do with it. I suppose a wireless amateur somewhere has been sending messages. Isn't that your clew?"

"No," pursued Kennedy quietly; "at least, not so far as I know now. No, but some one is using a peculiar form of wireless, near this building, too. I should think that you would find that the government operators about New York have been having a devil of a time lately with their apparatus—not all the time, but off and on—say, late last night, for instance."

Briefly, Kennedy outlined to Burke what he had discovered the night before.

"I don't quite see the connection," said Burke, whose mind was of anything but a scientific turn. "If it was any one else, I would say it was a pipe dream. But as long as it is you, I know better. Of course, I am in a position to help you locate the station from which those wireless impulses come, if it can be located at all."

"Well, perhaps there may be no connection between the loss of the secret of picral and the wireless," asserted Kennedy confidently, "but I am strongly of the opinion that there is. I believe that the same hand that stole the secret of the explosive is the hand behind these strange radio impulses. At any rate, we can do nothing better than see."

It was not until the forenoon that Burke called us up and asked us if we could meet him at the Brooklyn Navy Yard as soon as possible. We hurried across the river, and found him waiting for us at the gate, much excited.

With scarcely a word of explanation, he hurried us up the roadway at the entrance toward a building, before which stood two tall masts with wires stretching across and to the ground in a huge network, the wireless-telegraph station.

Burke opened the door, as if he were already familiar with the place, and introduced us to the operator and another man who was standing beside him.

"Is it there yet?" asked Burke anxiously.

"Yes—there it is again," said the operator, with a look of disgust on his face.

"What's the matter?" asked Kennedy. "Amateurs interfering?"

He nodded, shaking the telephonelike receiver on his head. "I think that is what it is. Some one has been jamming me, off and on, for a week. But, by Jove! those are powerful impulses."

Indeed, we could hear a crackling of sparks about parts of the apparatus.

"Touch that screen door with your knife," said Kelsey, the other man to whom we had been introduced.

Kennedy did so, and elicited large sparks, with quite a tingle to the hand holding the knife.

"Worse than a thundershower," grumbled the operator. "That's the kind of trouble we have when the air is overcharged."

"That's interesting," remarked Kennedy.

"I call it darned rotten!" exclaimed the operator.

"Yes," said Burke, "and Kelsey, here, has already been detailed to find who this amateur is who is interfering so with the government wireless. He thinks he has found out."

"Where?" asked Kennedy, turning to Kelsey.

"I have found a tenement house over on the East Side, a couple of blocks from the settlement, that Burke tells me about," replied Kelsey. "On the roof there is an arrangement that looks like the aerial of an amateur. Some one in the house must be responsible. I tried to trace the wires to one of the flats, but the nearest I could come to it was that they led down to the cellar."

"And," spoke up Burke, "we're going to raid the place this afternoon. You're welcome to come along."

Kennedy cut in quickly. "Don't," he remonstrated. "There isn't a chance of getting him or them unless you go about it with more care than that. You and Burke show me the house first. Then we'll get in touch with the central-office detectives, and maybe we can land something right."

"That's a good idea," agreed Burke. "I'll get Jimmy Dunn. Those central-office 'Dicks' at least know history, if they can't predict the future. What's the matter?"

The operator had looked up quickly.

"Nothing," he answered. "Only the interference is over."

I wondered whether the terrorist had completed sending out his long-distance death-dealing message of destruction, or whether he was apparently only testing the thing, as he had been the night before.

"Then it is a good chance," exclaimed Kennedy briskly. "He has probably finished for the present, and will go away and leave the place unguarded. Call up Dunn, Burke, and have him meet us somewhere near the place. Kelsey, of course, will come along."

An hour later, we met Dunn, who was of the square-toed, thick-necked variety of detective, though a mighty good fellow, and eagerly followed Burke and Kelsey as they led the way to the suspected tenement which Kelsey had found.

They led us eventually to a narrow tenement street. On a corner, we paused for a moment before an ill-favored saloon, where we could loiter, unnoticed, and surveyed the promising scene.

Kelsey pointed out the house.

"Why," exclaimed Dunn, "the Three Deuces, to be sure! The houses on both sides of this short block are steeped with the crime of forty years. But that one, the Three Deuces, has the grisliest history of all. We'll have to be careful if we are to get in there without being observed."

Singly, some of us loitering down the street, others going around the block in the other direction, we managed to slip into the cellar of the Three Deuces, without attracting attention, the sole reason being that since no one expected the "bulls," no one was watching.

In the rubbish that littered the place we saw nothing at first that conveyed any idea of what we were seeking. Kennedy passed over that quickly, and proceeded to the rear of the cellar, where there were several large bins, or, rather, compartments of brick built into the foundations of the building. Before one he paused. Of them all it was the only one locked, and it had the look of having been used. Moreover, he figured out that the air shaft of the tenement must have its base in this compartment, also, an additional reason why it should be the place we sought, since that would give access to the roof for wires.

Not a word had been spoken so far, and we had trod softly, carrying the figuratively big stick. Dunn had examined the lock carefully, and had drawn from his pocket a bunch of keys, from which he selected one of the skeleton variety, fitted it noiselessly to the lock, and, after considerable skillful maneuvering, turned it.

He did not open the door, but turned to us. "We have got so far," he whispered. "We have even succeeded in

picking their lock, whose ever it is. Are you game to go in?"

So far not a sound had disturbed the stillness of the cellar except the footsteps of those in the entrance hall above. A final glance covertly taken up and down the street had shown that it was deserted of suspicious characters, and even the children were at the other end engaged in a game of "cat."

"Go on!" whispered Kennedy hoarsely.

Dunn opened the door. As Craig peered in, there seemed to be nothing but darkness. We entered. Not a sound. Kennedy stealthily struck a match, having forgotten to bring his pocket electric bull's-eye.

He hastily blew it out. "No risks like that," he muttered, carefully disposing of it so that not a spark fell on the floor.

The subterranean vault of brick and stone was a large, square compartment, dark as pitch, and delightfully cool and damp.

"Just the place to keep explosives," he murmured.

He was groping around, as if looking for something which he had caught a glimpse of in the moment when the little circle of light had given him his bearings.

Suddenly there was a flash of light. I jumped. If it had been an explosion I would not have been surprised. It was, however, only an electric bulb, which Kennedy had seen and switched on, the contrast with the former blackness being almost blinding for the moment.

Our eyes had now become accustomed to the light, and we gazed about curiously, not without some fear lest the unrightful owner might return unexpectedly.

On every side we could see pieces of gas pipe, boxes, and paper. On shelves were jars of various materials. Along one side was a worktable littered with tools, pieces of wire, boxes, and scraps of metal.

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Kennedy, as he looked quickly about the strange vault, with more comprehending eyes than any of the rest of us; "this is a regular bomb factory. Really, Walter, it is one of the most amazing exhibits that my experience in crime has ever led me across. Look!"

We followed him in awe, as he made a hasty inventory of what we had discovered. There were as many as a dozen finished and partly finished infernal machines of various sizes and kinds, some of tremendous destructive capacity.

He had taken down one large jar full of yellow crystals.

"Picral," he said, nodding significantly to Burke. "You see we are on the right trail at last, through this wireless clew. Some one here knows how they stole the secret, and why."

Burke was too amazed to speak. It was a conglomerate mass that would have gladdened the heart of the most desperate terrorist imaginable. I shuddered. This was that very man's haunt—the workshop of the most desperate of anarchists. What if he should return and find us here? Would he hesitate one instant to blow both us and himself to perdition?

One contrivance, however, seemed to attract Kennedy's attention more than any other, and at any risk he was studying it. It was a half-finished coil, or, rather, series of coils, such as those which he had found inside the bombs which had not been exploded and had been dissected.

Near by, on the table, was an electric key and various other pieces of apparatus which were somewhat similar to those which one sees in a wireless-telegraph station. From them, wires ran up a little opening into the foot of the air shaft to the roof, as Kennedy had suspected.

Kennedy tried to look up, but could not. "Still, I am satisfied," he remarked, "that they do run to the aërials on the roof which seem to have attracted the attention of Kelsey in looking about the city for violators of the radio law. This," he added, waving his hand at the curious paraphernalia, "is the source of those terrific wireless impulses, the transformers, the coherers, the commutators, and other things that the fellow has applied on a theory of his own in order to explode the infernal machines, each packed with one of these little sparking arrangements which we see here."

"Wouldn't Nolan enjoy this?" remarked Burke, with a sort of grim humor at the ghastly pleasures of his friend.

We looked at the arrangement almost in fear, as if it were alive, and at any moment might respond to a spirit hand and shoot out its deadly invisible force at us.

"The fellow must have been testing his apparatus last night and this morning, as you guessed, Walter," commented Kennedy. "That would account for those long-continued impulses. If there had been any explosions, I think we should have heard about them."

"Perhaps he has been wondering why some of his machines did not explode," I suggested. "He could hardly suspect the truth, or he would be watching now."

"More than likely," agreed Craig.

He was examining a little quartz-lined electric furnace, which was evidently used for heating soldering irons and other tools in the work that the bomb maker did.

"Everything has been done here to make it as safe as possible and to prevent explosions," he commented. "He uses an electric furnace because of the danger from heat of fire. There are no open lights, and practically no chance for heat to be communicated far, so as to reach among the explosives. No jar short of an earthquake can disturb their dangerous equilibrium, either. Indeed, everything has been done most astutely to protect the bomb maker himself in his diabolical work."

For several moments, while we fidgeted uneasily in too close proximity to bottled death, Craig went over things, and seemed to be considering how to proceed.

At last he seemed to have hit upon a plan. He switched on the electric furnace and began selecting pieces of metal from the mass on the worktable. Quickly he bent and cut, filed and soldered them in the shape that he wanted, placing them together in a rather peculiar manner, using two dissimilar metals to form the arrangement and to them attaching some copper wire from a coil which lay in a corner.

Underneath the worktable, just below the furnace, one could feel the heat from the thing slightly. Kennedy had asked me, from time to time, to place my hand there, and had seemed quite satisfied with my report.

Deftly he took the curious affair which he had so hastily shaped and fastened it under the table. Next he led the wires back of the table under it, along the wall to the jamb of the door, and thence out into the cellar itself. The rest was easy, to carry them through the lumber and rubbish to a little barred window in the back, which had been placed there, apparently for ventilation, and looked out into the narrow back yard and the backs of another row of tenements on the next street.

That completed, much as Kennedy would have liked to stay, he yielded to us, and decided to go, before any one discovered us. We took a last look at the murder den, this assassins' club, to make sure that nothing had been disturbed which would arouse suspicion

and defeat the fortunate progress made by our visit.

"Let us go," he said, switching off the light, and motioning to Dunn to lock the door with the skeleton key. "I can make the connection outside through the window with those wires to some room in the next street, where they will never suspect any one watching. Now, the thing to do is to wait for a chance to catch the fellow red-handed."

We dropped into the laboratory to see whether there was anything there demanding attention.

There was only a short note from Hazleton. Evidently he had been thinking hard over the recent events, and had tried to get in touch with Kennedy by telephone. Failing, he had sent a brief note.

"Cannot something be done to get Margery Dwight out of this mess?" he wrote.

Craig had apparently been thinking about the same thing. "I simply must see that girl alone," he remarked thoughtfully. "She baffles me. I must say that I don't understand her."

He had reached for the telephone, and, not finding her at the settlement, tried the Dwight town house. Fortunately, she was there, and yielded to Kennedy's entreaty for an interview.

It was a very brief one, and Craig learned little more than he knew already.

He confessed to me afterward: "I did little more than set her thinking about her true self."

CHAPTER XIII.

"DON'T GO HOME!"

Late in the afternoon, Kennedy and I succeeded in finding a vacant apartment in the house that backed up to the Three Deuces, in the cellar of which was the murder den. After paying a deposit on it, we secured a table and a few chairs from the janitor for a small sum, received the key, and were now householders in one of the most wretched districts of the great city.

Kennedy had dispatched a note to Burke, and a hurried trip up to the laboratory had resulted in his collecting a rather large amount of paraphernalia, which he had made into two bundles. By the time we had carried the stuff downtown to the tenement apartment, it was quite dark.

After considerable difficulty, owing to the crowded condition of the yards between the two buildings, Craig managed to find an opportunity, unobserved, to pick up the loose ends of the wires which he had led out of the murder den through the grated window into the yard of the Three Deuces, and then to lead them along the fences and up to the flat, which was on the second floor, back.

I watched him at work, silently, as he attached the wires to two of the curious arrangements which had been unwrapped, and were placed on the rough table in the room. As far as I could make out, one of the pieces looked like a huge taximeter from a leviathan motor cab, the other like an undersized gas meter. Attached to them were several bells and little electric lights.

He had scarcely completed installing the thing, whatever it was, when there came a gentle tap on the door.

It startled me. I had not thought that any one knew we were here. It almost seemed to me as if the omniscient bomb maker must have seen us with his wireless eyes. Kennedy motioned to me to open the door, and I did so, though I must admit that I kept my foot against it until I found out that it was no other than Burke himself, very much excited.

"I got your note," he said, looking from Kennedy curiously to the stuff on the table. "Since I left you this afternoon, I've had men watching Leo's International."

"Yes?" inquired Kennedy, pausing eagerly.

"There seems to be a general feeling of excitement there," he went on. "I wish we had had more time. We might have been able to get a stool pigeon in there on the inside. But we've got to do our best as it is. As nearly as I can make out from the reports the operatives have given me, those people must be preparing to pull off something, a great final plot that will involve not only Hazleton and Burton, but other wealthy men and leaders of finance, a final coup. One of the men did get into the back room, and heard some one mention young Burton's name several times, and young Hazleton once."

Kennedy had returned to his work, as though with his fingers busy it must help his brain to work at the same time. A little bell tinkled sharply, and a light flashed up on one of the attachments of the apparatus.

"What's this?" asked Burke. "What does that mean?"

"Nothing in particular. I was just testing the thing to see if it works. It does work, although the arrangement I had to put down in the den under the worktable was only a very roughly constructed makeshift. It is not this red light with the shrill bell that I am interested in. It is the green light and the low-toned bell. This is what is known as a thermopile."

"A thermopile?" repeated Burke.

I said nothing. Although I was quite willing to betray my ignorance before Kennedy, I still was hypocritical enough to wish to bask in some of Craig's reflected glory before Burke.

"Yes," repeated Kennedy. "Walter will recall, if you do not, that when two half rings of dissimilar metals are joined together, and one of them is suddenly heated or chilled, there is produced at the opposite connecting point a feeble electric current, which will flow until the junctures are both at the same temperature. You might call it a telethermometer or a microthermometer that I have here."

"Well, I'll be darned—a telethermometer!" exclaimed Burke. "Kennedy, you're always pulling these long-distance stunts on us, a long-distance ear or eye. I suppose it will be a nose next."

"That fellow over there has a long-distance arm," laughed Craig. "You see, at this end of the line I merely measure the electromotive force developed by the difference in temperature of two similar thermoelectric junctions, opposed. Such junctions are called 'couples,' and when you place a number of them together, as I did in that thing I left down there, you call it a thermopile. By getting the recording instruments sensitive enough, the heat can be measured to one one-thousandth of a degree."

"Is that something new?" asked Burke.

"Oh, no, it's old," replied Kennedy. "But the machine which I have here at this end of the line is a new one, recently devised for registering the presence of ice floes by detecting the changes of temperature of sea water. It is called the Bristol detector, after the inventor who has applied the recent researches in reading the temperature of sea water."

"I understand," said Burke, puzzled; "but how are you going to detect the presence of anarchists?"

"Very easily. You see, it measures heat as well as cold. Down there in that den I placed the couples of the thermopile, which I had to improvise hastily, beneath the electric furnace. Here I have the mechanism operated by the feeble current from it, opening and closing switches, and actuating the bells and lights which show what is going on down there in the way of changes of temperature. Then, too, I

have recording instruments which make a permanent record."

"And it works?" asked Burke.

"Surely. I have just tested it. The thermopile is fundamentally very simple. It is based on well-known phenomena, and it is not uncertain. It can be tested at any time, just as I am testing it constantly now, to see whether it is working properly. You saw what I did then. It showed a slight fall in temperature in that room."

"Oh!" nodded Burke. "But I should think you'd find out too much. You don't care about how the weather changes down there."

"Of course not," said Craig. "Naturally it is not the slight changes that interest me. I don't care about the gradual changes, and the machine tells me nothing about them, either. It is any sudden change in temperature that I seek a warning of."

"I get you. The current is set up, and flows until the opposite side of this thermopile reaches the same temperature, and you have made several of those junctions to increase that weak current."

"Exactly. If there is a fall in temperature, the current flows in one direction, and we see the red light. If it rises, the current goes the other way, and we see a green light. The bells simply add another alarm. It is simply a long-distance sense of feeling much more delicate than could be used if one of us could be present in that room."

"Wonderful!" asserted Burke, now that he understood the thing, willing to give all the credit for it to Kennedy.

"I reasoned," explained Craig, "that no one would enter that den if they thought some one was watching, and, as the time was short, we had no means of finding out a place on that street where we could watch, and be sure that we, in turn, were not watched. So here we are, not far away, but as secure as if we were miles away. None of them would ever think of looking on this block. Yet the moment any sudden great change is registered, such as turning on that electric furnace, we shall know it instantly here, yet be within easy striking distance."

For several minutes we sat in silence in the little, bare room in darkness, watching the thermopile. Nothing happened. Yet we felt it necessary to keep the strictest watch, for we did not know what minute some one might enter the den.

Burke began to get restless, and now and then would leave us quietly, to call up the local headquarters of the secret service in order to get the reports of various of his men whom he had set shadowing some of those whose connection with the case warranted it.

It was after one of these excursions, each of which took him to a different local telephone pay station in order not to attract attention, that Burke returned quite excited.

"I have one of my men following Nevsky," he said, with some satisfaction. "That little dancer is certainly leading young Burton a merry chase. They had dinner together to-night, before the show, at Churchman's. My man has just reported that he managed to get the next table, and was able to overhear a few scraps of their conversation."

"What was it?" asked Kennedy, absolutely conscienceless about eavesdropping of this kind.

"Why, it seems they had a little quarrel. As near as the operative could make out, it was because he accused her of being too intimate with a friend of his whom he called 'the lieutenant.'"

"Gardner!" ejaculated Kennedy. "She was rather partial to him one night, I remember."

"What, Lieutenant Gardner—the man who invented picral?" cried Burke.

"Could she have roped him in, like Burton?"

"She has led along men of the world much more astute than Gardner," remarked Kennedy.

"Do you suppose—that he has become one of them?" gasped Burke. "He's a perfect mechanical genius. And then, too, my man tells me that it was evident that Burton had something on his mind about the stealing of the hydroaëroplane, too. You know that was kept over there at the Meadow Laboratory."

Kennedy looked noncommittally blank. Evidently he had his own opinion, but was not going to risk it until there was something tangible to back it up.

"Then," continued Burke, "as they rose, after scarcely eating the dinner, the operative heard Burton say to her, 'Ekaterina, you are concealing something from me. There is some one you are shielding.' She cried, 'No, no, Davy!' They left the restaurant, still talking earnestly, she to the music hall, and he to wait at the club. My man is watching her, but it will be a difficult thing for him to follow them afterward, if Burton meets her. Taxicabs and motor cars have made shadowing much more difficult than it used to be."

"What do you suppose was the purpose back of that meeting?" I asked, turning to Craig.

"I can't say," he replied. "It's hardly possible she could have got all she wants out of him yet."

"Unless it was to get at Gardner," I put in.

"Whatever it was," asserted Kennedy, "you may be sure that there was a deep-laid purpose. At any rate, it doesn't change my plans here in the least."

"There was a time," I remarked, "when I did think that perhaps Nevsky might be an agent provocateur of the Russian government, just as I thought poor Armand was the real criminal. I'm afraid I shall have to revise both opinions—although she might be a spy in the service of some government, seeking to get at some of our military and naval secrets, and posing all the time as one of the terrorists. I hardly know what to think."

Burke had risen. The report about Burton and Nevsky had been too great a tax on his patience. He could not sit still. His was a nature that demanded action, and it was only a few minutes later that he disappeared from the flat again, announcing this time that he was going to set a watch on Lieutenant Gardner, as well as the others.

It must have been about an hour that Kennedy and I sat, sometimes in silence, sometimes discussing various aspects of the case as it was now rapidly unfolding.

Once Kennedy sent me out to call up Burke's office, but I could get no information except that he had asked for the services of an extra operative, for what purpose was unknown.

When I returned, I found Kennedy pacing the floor thoughtfully, and as I entered he glanced at his watch. "Walter," he remarked, "it is pretty early yet. I doubt whether anything is going to happen back there right away. We are not very far from the settlement. Suppose you run over there and see if Morgan has any news. Only," he added, "be mighty careful when you come back. They know us now, and they might have some one who would follow you. Remember the old Indian saying, 'Don't go the same way twice.' Start off as if you were going uptown, when you do go, and double on your tracks after you have got on a trolley, or something else."

It was but a step over to the settlement, and I entered as if I had come from downtown, rather than from across town. As I made my way up to Hazleton's rooms, I was aware of an

uncomfortable feeling that something was wrong. The place seemed deserted, except for a few stragglers from some of the clubs who remained. Evidently some of the club leaders and workers had not put in an appearance that night.

I was just mounting the stairs of the last flight, when Hazleton himself, pale and nervous looking, almost ran into me.

"For Heaven's sake, Jameson," he cried, "where have you and Kennedy been all day?"

I glanced about. There did not seem to be a soul in earshot, yet I hesitated to say much. Without a word, I motioned to him to go upstairs to his room again, and briefly, without telling more than was absolutely necessary, I related what had happened since we had left our cozy little room there in the morning.

"You got my note?" he asked, eagerly interrupting.

"Yes," I reassured him; "and Kennedy visited Miss Dwight."

"Where?" he asked anxiously.

"At the Madison Avenue house," I replied, glossing over the, to me, fruitless interview as well as I could.

Morgan was pacing up and down restlessly, not from indecision, for that was foreign to his nature, but merely because he seemed to wish to settle the problem, whatever it was he was now facing, himself, without any help even from Kennedy.

"Your father—is—all right?" I ventured.

He stopped short, as if surprised by my question as an echo of his own thoughts.

"Jameson," he said, in a low, tense voice, pulling from his pocket a yellow telegram and shoving it into my hand, "I wasn't going to say anything about it. But perhaps it doesn't concern me alone, after all. Give that to Kennedy."

I read the message:

"Don't go home."

There was no signature, and I read it again, the ominous words, "Don't go home."

I looked at it critically. It had been written on a blank in an uptown office, and merely delivered by messenger to the settlement.

"Who sent it?" I asked. "Why should any one send such a message, when there are telephones that are quicker and surer?"

"I don't know, unless it was not to be recognized. They could tell me nothing at the messenger office. Burke called up a little while ago. Something awful is going to happen. I gathered it from his tone. I—I must—I will—get her out of it."

Hazleton had risen, and was now hurrying down the corridor to the stairs, followed by me.

I looked once more at the enigmatical, nameless message, "Don't go home." Then, without a moment to ask another question about it, I shoved it into my pocket, and followed him.

As we reached the street door of the settlement, I caught up with him. He turned in the direction to go uptown by the elevated. Mindful of what Kennedy had said, I turned that way, also.

"Tell Kennedy and Burke to forget about me," he burst out, as we hurried along.

At the foot of the elevated steps, he turned, laid his hand on my shoulder. "Don't follow me, Jameson," he muttered huskily. "My mind is made up. She must be got out of this—by force."

Before I could remonstrate, he was gone.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE STOLEN GOVERNMENT SECRET.

I had scarcely returned to Kennedy with the disquieting news of the mysterious message to Hazleton, when

Burke himself hurried in, quite breathless.

"Where have you been?" asked Craig keenly.

Burke seemed bursting with news. "I have just had a talk with a special agent from our headquarters at Washington," he answered; then, lowering his voice, he went on: "The government has just discovered that some time ago one of its most vital secrets was stolen—a duplicate copy of a scheme developed by Lieutenant Gardner at the Meadow Laboratory, for wireless control of boats and torpedoes."

"Telautomatics," put in Craig quickly, "including wireless explosion of bombs that are delivered in apparently harmless packages by legitimate and perhaps innocent people, and are then exploded from a distance by some one unknown and in comparative safety."

The secret-service man looked at Kennedy, nonplused for the moment at his injection of the word "telautomatics."

"You—you know it, then?" he gasped.

"I did not know the secret had been stolen from the government. But I knew that some one must have the method."

"Knew that some one must have it?" repeated Burke.

"Of course. That is what this fellow is using in the murder den—telautomatics. That was why I called you in as soon as I had a clew about that wireless."

Burke nodded. "The strange part of the whole affair is," he said slowly, "that both of us, if we had been working independently, would have got on the same trail, anyhow, ultimately. The chief sent the special agent directly to me here, and now I have one of my best men working with him on it."

"We've got a half nelson on this mystery now," observed Kennedy.

Burke was looking at Kennedy with even added respect. "Wonderful!" he muttered, under his breath. His astonishment at the course of events was so genuine that both Craig and I could not help laughing.

"A secret-service detective hasn't a monopoly of all wisdom, you see," smiled Craig.

"I see," admitted Burke. "That is why I am here. Besides—well, it certainly did me good to tell our special agent that I was already on that trail, and hoped to pull something big almost any moment. He was amazed. I guess he thinks I'm a wizard—just as I know you are."

Burke seemed to enjoy the situation heartily, and not the least flavor to his laugh was the thought that he was about to make good with the government almost the instant he was put on a new case.

"Very interesting," commented Kennedy, half to himself. "That, in its way, accounts for the vindictiveness that these terrorists have shown in pursuing Hazleton and Burton, who were putting up the money while the government lent the services of Gardner. They had a double incentive, both their hatred of society and the desire to get hold of so important a secret."

"And they've used young Burton to get at Gardner," hinted Burke.

Kennedy said nothing. He was silent for several minutes; then——

"Burke," he ordered, "see if you can get young Hazleton at his studio, or the town house, anywhere. I don't think you'll find him at the settlement, after what Walter saw. Then try to get Margery Dwight. The last we heard of her she was at the Madison Avenue house, but there is very little chance of her being there now. Try everywhere."

Burke had darted out, glad of something active to do, rather than to sit still and wait for the approaching moment of fate. The minutes while he

was gone seemed to drag unconscionably, although I knew that he was calling on every resource in the city to carry out Kennedy's instructions.

At last he returned, and I could tell by the look on his face that he had not succeeded in the errand.

"Could you find either of them?" asked Kennedy.

"No," replied Burke, somewhat crestfallen, for he prided himself on making good.

"I didn't expect that you could," reassured Craig. "Did you find anything?"

"There was a report from one of my men, which he sent down to my headquarters downtown, that he had been watching the International Café all the evening, and that Miss Dwight had been seen to enter it some time ago. But she went away later, and he was not able to follow her."

Again Burke hurried out to see whether there was any news. He came back a few minutes later, his face glowing.

"I've found him," he cried. "The man who is watching the International reported a stranger hovering about it suspiciously. By the description, I recognized Hazleton—or, at least, I think I did."

"Then he must have come back downtown!" I exclaimed.

"Probably did as I told you to do," put in Kennedy, "took the elevated, and doubled on his tracks, to throw you off. I wonder what that young man is up to, that he should want to keep away even from his friends?"

"He's daffy over that girl," observed Burke sagely.

"Better so than over the other one, like Burton," I defended.

"That's right," he agreed.

"Anything from Gardner yet?" asked Kennedy.

"Not a word," answered Burke disconsolately. "And, what's more, the fellow who was detailed to follow Nevsky lost her in the crowd on Broadway after the theaters were out."

"So that we don't know whether she met Burton again or not," I considered.

"He had left the club," answered Burke.

"Yes," observed Kennedy, "but that doesn't mean anything. She would throw Burton over for any one who served her purpose, in a moment. She has been keeping him on tenterhooks for days now by coquetting with Gardner."

"And it's Gardner's secrets that these people are using," exclaimed Burke, as if he had made a great discovery.

"Exactly. But, then, they have all visited Gardner over at the Meadow Laboratory. I heard them say that they had been there, with Burton. That was where he kept the hydroaëroplane which was stolen and found wrecked after we almost put it out of business that night at Rockcrest."

"I wonder if Gardner is as blameless as we have thought," considered Burke, after a few moments. "He was Burton's friend, and she seems to have been aiming at him through Burton."

"Nevsky has made fools of better men than either," remarked Kennedy enigmatically. "Still, these people are clever enough to use any one, even if he is neither fool nor tool, and Nevsky——"

The words died on his lips.

Suddenly the red light had flashed out brilliantly on the thermopile detector and the shrill bell had tinkled.

CHAPTER XV.

AT THE DEATH KEY.

It was the moment we had been waiting for for hours. Yet I felt as unprepared for the crisis as if it had come hours before, perhaps more so, now that I knew the full extent of the criminality of the terrorist. Not so Kennedy, however.

"What's that?" asked Burke, himself startled.

"Can't say—yet," answered Craig. "Perhaps nothing. Then again it may be, as I think it is, the door which has been suddenly opened letting a draft of fresh, cool air rush in. That is what the effect would have been on the thermopile. We shall have to wait a moment to see."

All attention now, we bent over the recorders of the thermopile, and strained our ears and eyes to catch the signals of the bells and lights.

Gradually the light faded.

"The thermopile is adjusting itself to the change in temperature," commented Craig.

What would the little instrument show next?

Without warning, a low-toned bell rang, and a bright green light flashed up before us.

Burke looked inquiringly at Kennedy. It was evidently the signal Craig had been waiting for.

"That can have only one meaning," he cried excitedly. "Some one is down there in that inferno at last—perhaps the terrorist himself, perhaps others with him."

The bell continued to ring and the light to glow.

"Shows that whoever is there has actually started the electric furnace," muttered Kennedy.

I felt that even though we knew some one had ventured into the place, it was a risky business to try to beard such a desperate man, perhaps a maniac, in his murder den.

Kennedy's attention was riveted on the telethermometer. What was he waiting for? Was he waiting until the terrorist had finished whatever he had undertaken?

In perhaps a minute the signals began to weaken. Burke, who had been fuming restlessly, was now violently excited. "Come on," he urged. "He is going away. Don't let him escape!"

"No," cautioned Kennedy. "He is not going away yet. That means only that the furnace has been going full power long enough to begin to equalize the temperature between the two thermoelectric junctions. He is evidently making something, perhaps another bomb. We have plenty of time to get him. Let us give them a chance to get settled so that we can take them off their guard."

As the signals grew weaker and weaker we waited impatiently. Finally the red light flashed up. Evidently the furnace had been shut off. The work was completed.

Kennedy jumped up and hurried out on the street, around the corner, and toward the Three Deuces, looming gloomy and forbidding in the darkness, with only here and there a stray light in a window. He glanced keenly into the shadows. There was no one watching, apparently.

"At any rate, we must take the chance," he whispered, as he carefully descended the cellar stairs and entered the black hole. We followed stealthily.

It was a difficult matter to pick our way through the clutter of the cellar floor without making a noise that would disturb the occupants of the little den at the far end, and we made slow progress, almost fearing to breathe.

Kennedy was the first to reach the little door whose lock the detective had picked. It was open just a fraction of an inch, and he bent his head to listen.

Inside, we could hear the whir of a motor and a roar that might possibly have been from the electric furnace, slowed down. But above all was the unmistakable tone of conversation, high, excited. There were several people there. If they heard us, I wondered, would they hesitate a moment to send us all to perdition, along with themselves, rather than submit to capture?

They had not taken the trouble even to barricade the door. Apparently the terrorists had reached a point in their scheme in which they feared no interruption. The thought ran through my mind that perhaps interruption was now too late, impossible.

A moment Kennedy paused. We could all hear the voices on the other side of the door now.

"You have followed us at your own risk, Hazleton," said one voice, with exaggerated politeness. "Now that you have been so good as to intrude yourself here, we have you. You are just in time to see how our inner circle is going to strike the greatest blow yet, which will rid this country at once of the curse of its big financiers who run the government, the business, the life of a nation of millions whom they keep in economic subjection."

Instantly I recognized the voice. It was Novikoff speaking.

"You see that key?" he asked. "And this? And this? I have only to depress any one of them, or all of them at once, and the most terrific explosions yet recorded will take place, miles away, putting an end to the financial hierarchy——"

"There is no such thing," put in Hazleton. "The fact is, that there is no place in this country for anarchists, such as you. I can forgive any sort of radicalism, even philosophical anarchism. But terrorism—never! If the people don't like the system, they can change it. Every election could be made a revolution. If you had the public opinion to support you, your revolution would already have taken place. You would need no terrorism. Without that support of public opinion, even your deadly plans cannot change the system. It may remove some of the heads, but not the system. Only evolution can change that."

"The old, old talk," laughed the voice of a woman. "I suppose you think he doesn't dare depress that key?"

A shrill cry followed:

"Don't, don't—for the love of God—of any power that you believe in—don't!"

I recognized instantly the voice of Margery. What did it mean?

"What, Margery, weakening?" asked Novikoff. "And after we have taken you in as one of ourselves in the inner circle?"

"No—no!" she cried, her voice trembling with emotion; "no, I never understood before. I came here, not knowing we were followed, to see if what others told me of you was true. And it is true," she added, her voice thrilling with feeling. "Those books, those bundles of literature which I delivered—they—they were not your books, not your pamphlets. They were bombs, done up to look like them. All the time you were preaching Tolstoy and nonresistance to me, you were practicing terrorism, preparing to lead me on, involve me."

Novikoff laughed harshly. "So," he said, jerking his head contemptuously at Hazleton, "he—has converted you—at last?"

There was no answer.

"Margery," coaxed a woman's voice, "you are one of us. We live or die together."

Still there was no answer.

"Who will believe your story?" pursued Novikoff. "Armand is dead, and no one would have believed him if he had lived and we had exposed his record in Paris. No one will believe you. Choose—choose! Is it to be with us—or with this man who has been fool enough to thrust himself into our power?"

Novikoff had evidently advanced toward her, half coaxing, half threatening.

"When I depress that key, over there, we leave this place. I shall lock it.

This bomb which I have just made, an old-fashioned one, with a slow-burning fuse, will blow to pieces all the evidence here against us. The most expert detective cannot piece together what was here or gain a clew from it all. Some one must have warned Hazleton, or he would have gone home to-night, as he intended. But his father is there. It makes no difference. He has come here—followed us. We shall have to leave him here with the slow-burning fuse. Choose! I am about to light the fuse and touch the keys!"

"I have chosen," she answered calmly. "It was I who sent the note that warned him, I who woke up to the truth after that searching examination by Professor Kennedy. I made up my mind to find out your last secret, before you suspected me. Now I know it."

The man gave a growl of rage.

"You did?" he hissed. "Traitress! Then you, too, may stay here with him. You may die together. As for Kennedy, we shall get him, too, yet—the bloodhound of these hunters of the people!"

"And that," she laughed, with a dry, almost hysterical laugh, "is the man who talked of the higher mating of souls than any marriage that society could sanction. I see how it would have ended, if it had ever even begun."

"Margery Dwight," he cried, "I have picked you out because through you I could strike at society a far sharper blow than by any bomb. If you scorn me—then I will strike at you, too, with a bomb."

"I, too, have struck at the heart of another," put in the woman's voice, coldly, exultingly, "at Burton—poor fool! He thought I was like the others he had known. But I was not. I used him to get at a secret he knew nothing of, the secret of a friend of his. We shall sell that secret to the spies of Paris to get money to go ahead with our war on society. But we have also kept the secret for our own war."

"And you, Hazleton," cut in Novikoff, "you are a fitting son of your father, hoodwinking the masses while he grinds them down. Between you all, we have managed to get such entrance that we have been able to place our bombs as we liked. Once your Armand weakened. I call him your Armand. You contaminated him with what you call your charity. He had been one of us before we fled from Paris. But he —weakened. Yet he knew the hopelessness of being against the group. He knew that we would get him. So he saved us the trouble of removing him, by removing himself. Poor fool!"

Kennedy had moved the door gradually just a trifle so that he could peer in.

He drew back quickly, and whispered to us: "He's on the other side of the room from the telautomaton. Are you ready?"

An instant later, he had flung the door open wide, and strode in between Novikoff and that death-dealing thing.

In the weird light that flared from the furnace we saw a man and a woman standing side by side. The ghastly light played over the man's features, transforming him, as it were. There was an insane expression in his eyes.

It was the inner circle of the band of anarchists, a black band, a murder syndicate.

For a moment Novikoff and Nevsky stood together. Then, before Kennedy could reach him, Novikoff darted into a little inner room, a sort of closet inclosed in the brickwork by a sheet-iron door.

"Vive l'anarchie!" cried Nevsky, beside herself in the excitement of the moment.

She, too, darted into the little closet, flinging her arms passionately about Novikoff as he banged shut the door.

Shrilly Burke blew on his police whistle.

With one sweeping blow, Kennedy shattered the fearful telautomaton before us.

Hazleton had seized a heavy instrument from the worktable and was advancing to batter down the sheet-iron door of the inner vault.

Kennedy caught his arm, then swept around and seized Margery, half fainting, about the waist, lifting her off her feet.

"Hurry!" he shouted. "The slow-burning bomb! He has it with him, and can shorten the fuse!"

Stumbling, crashing ahead, we made for the street through the litter of the cellar. We had scarcely time to gain the top of the steps that led down into it, when the very earth rocked beneath us.

I do not know what happened after that. Fortunately, I was only stunned. But when I came to consciousness there was a veritable riot on the street, people shouting, heads out of windows, others running up to us, half clad, and above me, as I lay on the sidewalk, Kennedy and Burke, with two policemen pushing back the ever-increasing crowd that pressed in on all sides.

"Wh-what has happened?" I asked, still dazed, but staggering up to my feet.

In the uproar, no one heard the words, and a moment later it all came flooding back into my aching brain.

The whole of the back of the infamous old Three Deuces had been torn out by the explosion, as if to expose to the world all its dark secrets. But it had been as Novikoff had said: Scarcely a trace had been left of what had before been the murder den.

As for the bodies of the two victims, they had disappeared in the gruesome pyre as if the hand of fate had suddenly reached down and annihilated them.

Kennedy was gingerly traversing the tangled mass of brick and stone, braving the fall of the back walls of the building in his desire to see what was left.

Jammed by terrific force into the very earth back of a retaining wall, he found a part of a blood-spattered woman's shoe.

He picked it up quickly, then drew from his pocket the little piece of leather that he had found on the grass at Rockcrest, which had fitted into the track left in the flower bed of the garden at the Hazleton town house.

The two heels were clearly of the same make, size, and character.

"Come," he said to me, as I had reeled dizzily after him, determined to add what strength I had remaining to his in case any new danger threatened, "come—this is too gruesome."

On the sidewalk, which had now been cleared, Margery was supporting Hazleton, pale and weak, with a bandage about his head torn from her underskirt. He had been the last to leave, shielding her from the force of the explosion as Kennedy carried her.

The tenderness of the look on her face told me that the real Margery had found herself at last in love and service.

"They—they can't make her testify—against me, at least—if she is—my wife, Kennedy," he murmured.

Kennedy saw how desperately Hazleton had tried to the last to shield her, not only from the law but from us.

"No," assured Craig, "and it won't be necessary. What she did was done in ignorance."

He turned and surveyed the wreckage.

"Besides," he said slowly, "the victims are all safe." Then, with a gesture at the pile on which the mortar dust had not yet settled, he added: "There are the real criminals."

THE END.

A Chat With You

IF you have been reading THE POPULAR any length of time, and stop to think a moment, you will realize that you have made, through the medium of this magazine, a good many friends—just as real and more entertaining and interesting than many of those you meet on the street or in the office. There are all the members of the Happy Family to which B. M. Bower introduced you, and of whom you are likely to hear more in future numbers of the magazine. There is Bertrand Sinclair's Roaring Bill, a man not easily forgotten, there are McPike and Leamy, and other two-fisted people of the northern forests with whom A. M. Chisholm has made you acquainted. There's Ferguson's Lisping Jimmy, and Kyne's Sergeant Ryan, as well as Jim Stearns and Hector McGrath and the other young gentlemen from New Haven, who entered POPULAR circles under the guidance of Ralph D. Paine. If you close your eyes and think of any of them, you can see him quite plainly, we think. That is one of the great advantages of having a magazine without pictures. No unsympathetic artist can spoil the personality of your favorite character by making him look like something entirely different.

THE supreme test of good work in a story is whether or not it makes a character live for you. We have said enough to show that a great many stories in THE POPULAR have stood this test successfully. All the people we introduce you to are worth knowing—some more and some less—but when we find some one new who we think is worth keeping in the magazine for some time, we feel that we have found a really exceptional man. Such a man is young Mr. McHenry, who will make his bow to you in the next issue of the magazine. McHenry is a student at Harvard University. The name by which he is best known to his intimates is "Pepper," and whatever you may think about McHenry you will assuredly feel that the name fits him. You'll meet him for the first time in the first of a series of college stories, which will appear in the issue of THE POPULAR out two weeks from to-day. Ralph Paine wrote for THE POPULAR the only really good stories of Yale life that have ever been published. Holworthy Hall, whose story, "Pepper," you will read in the next issue of the magazine, is doing the same thing for Harvard. Any one who has lived in Cambridge knows what Holworthy Hall means. These stories of his, which will run for some time in THE POPULAR, really give you in its true atmosphere the inside of college life to-day at the oldest of our great universities. Their reality, the truthful picture they give, make them worth while, but what counts a good deal more is that they are rattling good stories.

SPEAKING of college stories, Ralph D. Paine is at work on a new book, a college story this time which will appear complete in a future number of this magazine. Speaking of authors whose work you have known for some time, Bertrand Sinclair has a new book-length novel which appears complete in the next issue of this magazine. It is called "A Ton of Gold," and is one of the best long novels that Sinclair has ever written. *The Bubble and Squeak* was the rather descriptive name given to an ancient steamer that navigated an

Alaskan river, and was the only source of communication between a rich mine and the outside world. How a ton of gold was shipped aboard the steamer, the ingenious method by which it was stolen, and how it was recovered, make the skeleton of the story—but, after all, this is the least interesting part of the tale. The men and women who are actors in the drama, the good and evil in them, their temptations and weaknesses, their self-sacrifice and devotion—things like these are what make life worth living and stories worth reading. Frankly speaking, it has always seemed to us that the soulless and sordid tale of a selfish man who wanted something, a fortune, or a girl, or fame, was not worth printing. No matter how well it is told, no matter how thrilling the suspense, or bewildering the complications, a story must have a soul to make it valuable and memorable. Nobody ever became a lovable, useful human being by studying abstract principles in the way of ethics. If a man feels once in a while a stir of generous emotion, if he realizes that personal gain is not always the highest or noblest success, if he feels—and with his heart, not with his head—that sometimes he would rather do the right thing than gain a fortune, he is on a surer, safer path to his soul's salvation and to the mastery of his spirit than if he spent all his days studying sermons. Stories in which the facts of life and the characters of men and women are so shown as to arouse such feelings are the stories that count, and the sort we are trying to give you. With all of us, feeling means something deeper and more vital than thinking, and it is the story-teller, not the preacher, who in the main is best able to make us feel.

THERE are thirteen items in the table of contents of the next issue of THE POPULAR. There are stories of diplomatic intrigue, baseball stories, business stories, sea stories, stories of city life, college stories, and detective stories—but the really significant and important fact about them, the underlying reason why you are going to like the next issue especially well is that they are all *good* stories in every sense of the simple and old-fashioned adjective. We hope that by this time you have read the first part of Oppenheim's four-part story, "Missing." In a recent speech President Wilson, who is generally considered a man of considerable literary taste, as well as other distinguished intellectual qualities, said: "There are blessed intervals when I forget by one means or another that I am President of the United States. One means by which I forget is to get a rattling good detective story, get after some imaginary offender and chase him all over—preferably any continent but this." "Missing" is certainly a rattling good detective story, and if it can make the president forget his burdens it will help you to forget yours. A moment ago we were speaking of the service that fiction can do us by making us think and feel. No less important is the service it can do us in taking us out of ourselves, of bringing a blessed release from the hurts and cares of business and the world about us. Introspection may be good at times, but it is a dangerous pastime, and too much of it makes a man an egoist. And egoism sooner or later will make a man gloomy, dissatisfied with life, sour and crabbed. The best thing you can do is to order the next issue of THE POPULAR from the news dealer at once.

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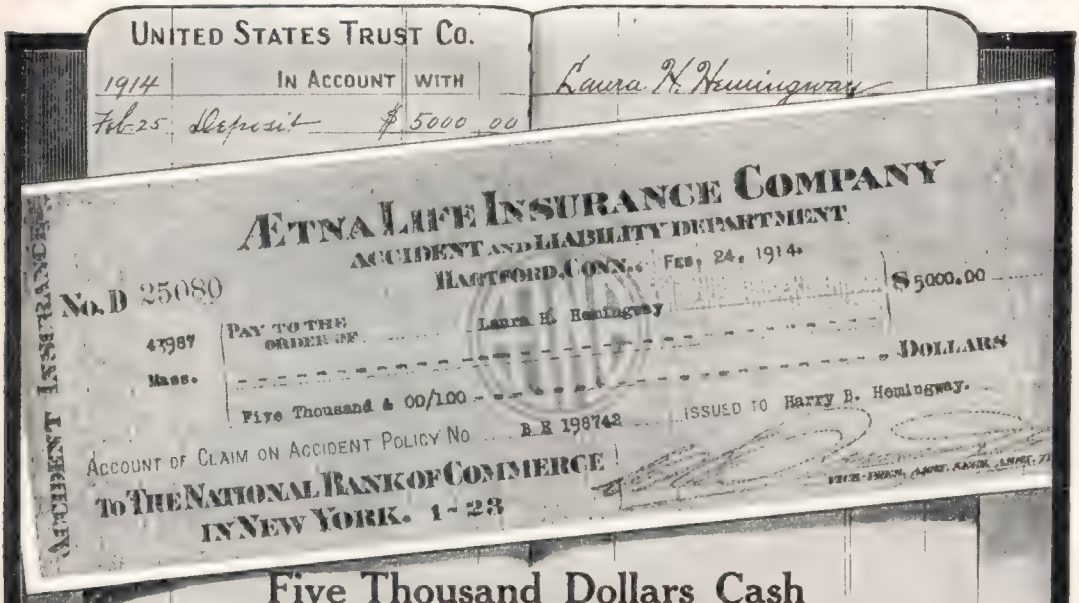

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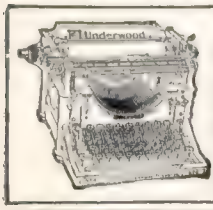

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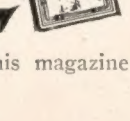

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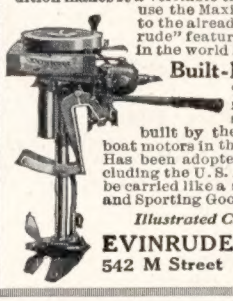

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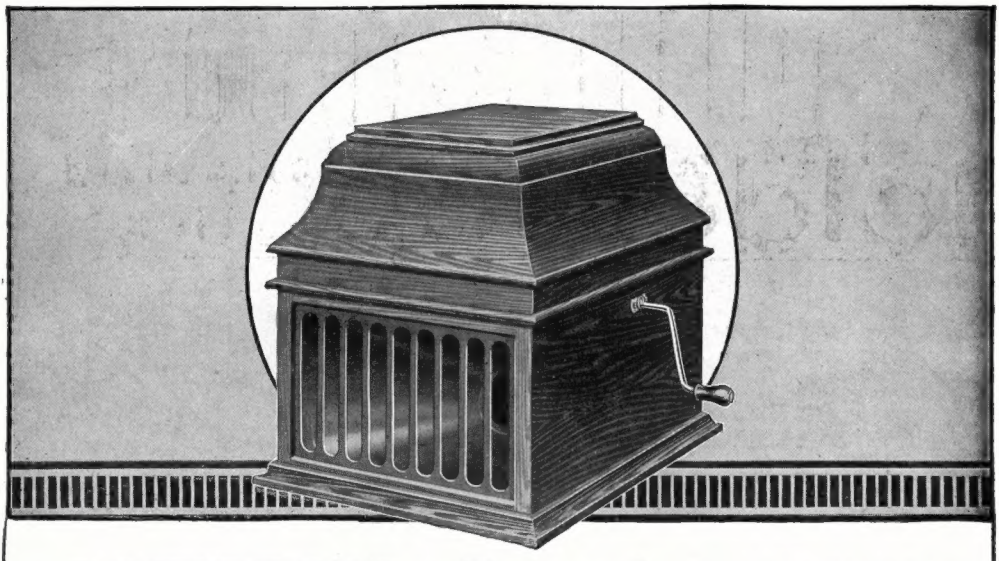

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